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ADVENTURES

OF

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

ADVENTURES

OF

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE,

OR

SCENES

BEYOND THE

ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF THE FAR WEST.

BY WASHINGTON IRVING.

AUTHOR OF

"THE SKETCH-BOOK," "THE ALHAMBRA," "ASTORIA," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

813
1501

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

WHILE engaged in writing an account of the grand enterprise of ASTORIA, it was my practice to seek all kinds of oral information connected with the subject. Nowhere did I pick up more interesting particulars than at the table of Mr. John Jacob Astor; who, being the patriarch of the Fur Trade in the United States, was accustomed to have at his board various

persons of adventurous turn, some of whom had been engaged in his own great undertaking; others, on their own account, had made expeditions to the Rocky mountains and the waters of the Columbia.

Among these personages, one who peculiarly took my fancy, was Captain Bonneville, of the United States' army; who, in a rambling kind of enterprise, had strangely ingrafted the trapper and hunter upon the soldier. As his expeditions and adventures will form the leading theme of the following pages, a few biographical particulars concerning him may not be unacceptable.

Captain Bonneville is of French parentage. His father was a worthy old emigrant, who came to this country many years since, and took up his abode in New

York. He is represented as a man not much calculated for the sordid struggle of a money-making world, but possessed of a happy temperament, a festivity of imagination, and a simplicity of heart, that made him proof against its rubs and trials. He was an excellent scholar: well acquainted with Latin and Greek, and fond of the modern classics. His book was his elysium; once immersed in the pages of Voltaire, Corneille, or Racine, or of his favourite English author, Shakspeare, he forgot the world and all its concerns. Often would he be seen in summer weather, seated under one of the trees on the Battery, or the portico of St. Paul's church in Broadway, his bald head uncovered, his hat lying by his side, his eyes rivetted to the page of his book, and his whole soul so

engaged, as to lose all consciousness of the passing throng or the passing hour.

Captain Bonneville, it will be found, inherited something of his father's *bonhomie*, and his excitable imagination; though the latter was somewhat disciplined in early years, by mathematical studies. He was educated at our national Military Academy at West Point, where he acquitted himself very creditably; from thence, he entered the army, in which he has ever since continued.

The nature of our military service took him to the frontier, where, for a number of years, he was stationed at various posts in the far west. Here he was brought into frequent intercourse with Indian traders, mountain trappers, and other pioneers of the wilderness; and became so excited by their

tales of wild scenes and wild adventures, and their accounts of vast and magnificent regions as yet unexplored, that an expedition to the Rocky mountains became the ardent desire of his heart, and an enterprise to explore untrodden tracts, the leading object of his ambition.

By degrees he shaped this vague day-dream into a practical reality. Having made himself acquainted with all the requisites for a trading enterprise beyond the mountains, he determined to undertake it. A leave of absence, and a sanction of his expedition, was obtained from the major general in chief, on his offering to combine public utility with his private projects, and to collect statistical information for the War Department, concerning the wild countries and wild tribes he might visit in the course of his journeyings.

Nothing now was wanting to the darling project of the captain, but the ways and means. The expedition would require an outfit of many thousand dollars; a staggering obstacle to a soldier, whose capital is seldom any thing more than his sword. Full of that buoyant hope, however, which belongs to the sanguine temperament, he repaired to New York, the great focus of American enterprise, where there are always funds ready for any scheme, however chimerical or romantic. Here he had the good fortune to meet with a gentleman of high respectability and influence, who had been his associate in boyhood, and who cherished a schoolfellow friendship for him. He took a general interest in the scheme of the captain; introduced him to commercial men of his acquaintance, and in a little while an association was formed,

and the necessary funds were raised to carry the proposed measure into effect.

One of the most efficient persons in this association was Mr. Alfred Seton, who, when quite a youth, had accompanied one of the expeditions sent out by Mr. Astor to his commercial establishments on the Columbia, and had distinguished himself by his activity and courage at one of the interior posts. Mr. Seton was one of the American youths who were at Astoria at the time of its surrender to the British, and who manifested such grief and indignation at seeing the flag of their country hauled down. The hope of seeing that flag once more planted on the shores of the Columbia, may have entered into his motives for engaging in the present enterprise.

Thus backed and provided, Captain

Bonneville undertook his expedition into the far west, and was soon beyond the Rocky mountains. Year after year elapsed without his return. The term of his leave of absence expired, yet no report was made of him at head-quarters at Washington. He was considered virtually dead or lost, and his name was stricken from the army list.

It was in the autumn of 1835, at the country seat of Mr. John Jacob Astor, at Hellgate, that I first met with Captain Bonneville. He was then just returned from a residence of upwards of three years among the mountains, and was on his way to report himself at head-quarters, in the hopes of being reinstated in the service. From all that I could learn, his wanderings in the wilderness, though they had gratified

his curiosity and his love of adventure, had not much benefited his fortunes. Like Corporal Trim in his campaigns, he had "satisfied the sentiment," and that was all. In fact, he was too much of the frank, free-hearted soldier, and had inherited too much of his father's temperament, to make a scheming trapper, or a thrifty bargainer.

There was something in the whole appearance of the captain that prepossessed me in his favour. He was of the middle size, well made and well set; and a military frock of foreign cut, that had seen service, gave him a look of compactness. His countenance was frank, open, and engaging; well browned by the sun, and had something of a French expression. He had a pleasant black eye, a high forehead,

and, while he kept his hat on, the look of a man in the jocund prime of his days; but the moment his head was uncovered, a bald crown gained him credit for a few more years than he was really entitled to.

Being extremely curious, at the time, about every thing connected with the far west, I addressed numerous questions to him. They drew from him a number of extremely striking details, which were given with mingled modesty and frankness; and in a gentleness of manner, and a soft tone of voice, that contrasted singularly with the wild and often startling nature of his themes. It was difficult to conceive the mild, quiet-looking personage before you, the actual hero of the stirring scenes related.

In the course of three or four months, happening to be at the city of Washington, I again came upon the captain, who was attending the slow adjustment of his affairs with the War Department. I found him quartered with a worthy brother in arms, a major in the army. Here he was writing at a table, covered with maps and papers, in the centre of a large barrack-room, fancifully decorated with Indian arms, and trophies, and war dresses, and the skins of various wild animals, and hung round with pictures of Indian games and ceremonies, and scenes of war and hunting. In a word, the captain was beguiling the tediousness of attendance at court, by an attempt at authorship; and was rewriting and extending his travelling notes, and making maps

of the regions he had explored. As he sat at the table, in this curious apartment, with his high bald head of somewhat foreign cast, he reminded me of some of those antique pictures of authors that I have seen in old Spanish volumes.

The result of his labours was a mass of manuscript, which he subsequently put at my disposal, to fit it for publication, and bring it before the world. I found it full of interesting details of life among the mountains, and of the singular castes and races, both white men and red men, among whom he had sojourned. It bore, too, throughout, the impress of his character, his *bonhomie*, his kindliness of spirit, and his susceptibility to the grand and beautiful.

That manuscript has formed the staple

of the following work. I have occasionally interwoven facts and details, gathered from various sources, especially from the conversations and journals of some of the captain's contemporaries, who were actors in the scenes he describes. I have also given it a tone and colouring drawn from my own observation during an excursion into the Indian country beyond the bounds of civilization; as I before observed, however, the work is substantially the narrative of the worthy captain, and many of its most graphic passages are but little varied from his own language.

I shall conclude this notice by a dedication which he had made of his manuscript to his hospitable brother in arms, in whose quarters I found him occupied in his literary labours; it is a dedication

which, I believe, possesses the qualities, not always found in complimentary documents of the kind, of being sincere, and being merited.

TO

JAMES HARVEY HOOK,

MAJOR, U. S. A.

WHOSE JEALOUSY OF ITS HONOUR,

WHOSE ANXIETY FOR ITS INTERESTS,

AND

WHOSE SENSIBILITY FOR ITS WANTS,

HAVE ENDEARED HIM TO THE SERVICE AS

THE SOLDIER'S FRIEND;

AND WHOSE GENERAL AMENITY, CONSTANT CHEERFULNESS,

DISINTERESTED HOSPITALITY, AND UNWEARIED

BENEVOLENCE, ENTITLE HIM TO THE

STILL LOFTIER TITLE OF

THE FRIEND OF MAN,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED.

ADVENTURES

OF

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF THE FUR TRADE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN—AMERICAN ENTERPRISES—GENERAL ASHLEY AND HIS ASSOCIATES—SUBLETTE, A FAMOUS LEADER—YEARLY RENDEZVOUS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS—STRATAGEMS AND DANGERS OF THE TRADE—BANDS OF TRAPPERS—INDIAN BANDITTI—CROWS AND BLACKFEET—MOUNTAINEERS—TRADERS OF THE FAR WEST—CHARACTER AND HABITS OF THE TRAPPER.

In a recent work we have given an account of the grand enterprise of Mr. John Jacob Astor, to establish an American emporium for the fur trade at the mouth of the Columbia, or Oregon river; of the failure of that enterprise through the capture of Astoria by the British in 1814; and of the way in which the control of the

trade of the Columbia and its dependencies fell into the hands of the North-west Company. We have stated, likewise, the unfortunate supineness of the American government, in neglecting the application of Mr. Astor for the protection of the American flag, and a small military force, to enable him to reinstate himself in the possession of Astoria at the return of peace; when the post was formally given up by the British government, though still occupied by the North-west Company. By that supineness the sovereignty in the country has been virtually lost to the United States; and it will cost both governments much trouble and difficulty to settle matters on that just and rightful footing, on which they would readily have been placed, had the proposition of Mr. Astor been attended to. We shall now state a few particulars of subsequent events, so as to lead the reader up to the period of which we are about to treat, and to prepare him for the circumstances of our narrative.

In consequence of the apathy and neglect of the American government, Mr. Astor abandoned all thoughts of regaining Astoria, and made no further attempt to extend his enterprises beyond the Rocky mountains; and the North-west Company considered themselves the lords of the country. They did not long enjoy unmolested the sway which they had somewhat surreptitiously attained. A fierce competition ensued between them and their old rivals, the Hudson's Bay Company; which was carried on at great cost and sacrifice, and occasionally with the loss of life. It ended in the ruin of most of the partners of the North-west Company; and the merging of the relics of that establishment, in 1821, in the rival association. From that time, the Hudson's Bay Company enjoyed a monopoly of the Indian trade from the coast of the Pacific to the Rocky mountains, and for a considerable extent north and south. They removed their emporium from Astoria to Fort Vancouver, a strong post on the left of the bank

of Columbia river, about sixty miles from its mouth; from whence they furnished their interior posts, and sent forth their brigades of trappers.

The Rocky mountains formed a vast barrier between them and the United States, and their stern and awful defiles, their rugged valleys, and the great western plains watered by their rivers, remained almost a terra incognita to the American trapper. The difficulties experienced in 1808, by Mr. Henry of the Missouri Company, the first American who trapped upon the head waters of the Columbia; and the frightful hardships sustained by Wilson, P. Hunt, Ramsay Crooks, Robert Stuart, and other intrepid Astorians, in their ill-fated expeditions across the mountains, appeared for a time to check all further enterprise in that direction. The American traders contented themselves with following up the head branches of the Missouri, the Yellowstone, and other rivers and streams on the Atlantic side of the mountains, but

forbore to attempt those great snow-crowned sierras.

One of the first to revive these tramontane expeditions was General Ashley, of Missouri, a man whose courage and achievements in the prosecution of his enterprises have rendered him famous in the far west. In conjunction with Mr. Henry, already mentioned, he established a post on the banks of the Yellowstone river, in 1822, and in the following year pushed a resolute band of trappers across the mountains to the banks of the Green river or Colorado of the west, often known by the Indian name of the Seeds-ke-dee Agie.* This attempt was followed up and sustained by others, until in 1825, a footing was secured, and a complete system of trapping organized beyond the mountains.

It is difficult to do justice to the courage, fortitude, and perseverance of the pioneers of the fur trade, who conducted these early expeditions,

* *i. e.* The Prairie Hen river. Agie in the Crow language signifies river.

and first broke their way through a wilderness where every thing was calculated to deter and dismay them. They had to traverse the most dreary and desolate mountains, and barren and trackless wastes, uninhabited by man, or occasionally infested by predatory and cruel savages. They knew nothing of the country beyond the verge of their horizon, and had to gather information as they wandered. They beheld volcanic plains stretching around them, and ranges of mountains piled up to the clouds, and glistening with eternal frost: but knew nothing of their defiles, or how they were to be penetrated or traversed. They launched themselves in frail canoes on rivers, without knowing whither their swift currents would carry them, or what rocks, and shoals, and rapids, they might encounter in their course. They had to be continually on the alert, too, against the mountain tribes, who beset every defile, laid ambuscades in their path, or attacked them in their night encampments; so that, of the hardy bands of trappers that

first entered into these regions, three-fifths are said to have fallen by the hands of savage force.

In this wild and warlike school a number of leaders have sprung up, originally in the employ, subsequently partners of Ashley; among these we may mention Smith, Fitzpatrick, Bridger, Robert Campbell, and William Sublette; whose adventures and exploits partake of the wildest spirit of romance.

The association commenced by General Ashley underwent various modifications. That gentleman having acquired sufficient fortune, sold out his interest and retired; and the leading spirit that succeeded him was Captain William Sublette: a man worthy of note, as his name has become renowned in frontier story. He is a native of Kentucky, and of game descent; his maternal grandfather, Colonel Wheatley, a companion of Boon, having been one of the pioneers of the west, celebrated in Indian

warfare, and killed in one of the contests of the "Bloody Ground."

We shall frequently have occasion to speak of this Sublette, and always to the credit of his game qualities. In 1830, the association took the name of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, of which Captain Sublette and Robert Campbell were prominent members.

In the mean time, the success of this company attracted the attention and excited the emulation of the American Fur Company, and brought them once more into the field of their ancient enterprise. Mr. Astor, the founder of the association, had retired from busy life, and the concerns of the company were ably managed by Mr. Ramsay Crooks, of Snake river renown, who still officiates as its president. A competition immediately ensued between the two companies, for the trade with the mountain tribes, and the trapping of the head waters of the Columbia, and the other great tributaries of the

Pacific. Beside the regular operations of these formidable rivals, there have been from time to time desultory enterprises, or rather experiments, of minor associations, or of adventurous individuals, beside roving bands of independent trappers, who either hunt for themselves, or engage for a single season, in the service of one or other of the main companies.

The consequence is, that the Rocky mountains and the ulterior regions, from the Russian possessions in the north, down to the Spanish settlements of California, have been traversed and ransacked in every direction by bands of hunters and Indian traders; so that there is scarcely a mountain pass, or defile, that is not known and threaded in their restless migrations, nor a nameless stream that is not haunted by the lonely trapper.

The American fur companies keep no established posts beyond the mountains. Every thing there is regulated by resident partners; that is to say, partners who reside in the tra-

montane country, but who move about from place to place, either with Indian tribes, whose traffic they wish to monopolize, or with main bodies of their own men, whom they employ in trading and trapping. In the mean time, they detach bands, or "brigades" as they are termed, of trappers in various directions, assigning to each a portion of country as a hunting or trapping ground. In the months of June or July, when there is an interval between the hunting seasons, a general rendezvous is held at some designated place in the mountains, where the affairs of the past year are settled by the resident partners, and the plans for the following year arranged.

To this rendezvous repair the various brigades of trappers from their widely separated hunting grounds, bringing in the products of their year's campaign. Hither also repair the Indian tribes accustomed to traffic their peltries with the company. Bands of free trappers resort hither also, to sell the furs they have

collected; or to engage their services for the next hunting season.

To this rendezvous the company sends annually a convoy of supplies from its establishment on the Atlantic frontier, under the guidance of some experienced partner or officer. On the arrival of this convoy, the resident partner at the rendezvous depends, to set all his next year's machinery in motion.

Now as the rival companies keep a vigilant eye upon each other, and are anxious to discover each other's plans and movements, they generally contrive to hold their annual assemblages at no great distance from each other. An eager competition exists also between their respective convoys of supplies, which shall first reach its place of rendezvous. For this purpose, they set off with the first appearance of grass on the Atlantic frontier, and push with all diligence for the mountains. The company that can first open its tempting supplies of coffee, tobacco, ammunition, scarlet cloth,

blankets, bright shawls and glittering trinkets, has the greatest chance to get all the peltries and furs of the Indians and free trappers, and to engage their services for next season. It is able, also, to fit out and despatch its own trappers the soonest, so as to get the start of its competitors, and to have the first dash into the hunting and trapping grounds.

A new species of strategy has sprung out of this hunting and trapping competition. The constant study of the rival bands is to forestal and outwit each other; to supplant each other in the good will and custom of the Indian tribes; to cross each other's plans; to mislead each other as to routes; in a word, next to his own advantage, the study of the Indian trader is the disadvantage of his competitor.

The influx of this wandering trade has had its effects on the habits of the mountain tribes. They have found the trapping of the beaver their most profitable species of hunting; and the traffic with the white man has opened to

them sources of luxury of which they previously had no idea. The introduction of firearms has rendered them more successful hunters, but at the same time, more formidable foes; some of them, incorrigibly savage and warlike in their nature, have found the expeditions of the fur traders, grand objects of profitable adventure. To waylay and harass a band of trappers with their pack-horses, when embarrassed in the rugged defiles of the mountains, has become as favourite an exploit with these Indians as the plunder of a caravan to the Arab of the desert. The Crows and Blackfeet, who were such terrors in the path of the early adventurers to Astoria, still continue their predatory habits, but seem to have brought them to greater system. They know the routes and resorts of the trappers; where to waylay them on their journeys; where to find them in the hunting seasons, and where to hover about them in winter quarters. The life of a trapper, therefore, is a perpetual state

militant, and he must sleep with his weapons in his hands.

A new order of trappers and traders, also, have grown out of this system of things. In the old times of the great North-west Company, when the trade in furs was pursued chiefly about the lakes and rivers, the expeditions were carried on in batteaux and canoes. The voyageurs or boatmen were the rank and file in the service of the trader, and even the hardy "men of the north," those great rufflers and game birds, were fain to be paddled from point to point of their migrations.

A totally different class has now sprung up, "the Mountaineers," the traders and trappers that scale the vast mountain chains, and pursue their hazardous vocations amidst their wild recesses. They move from place to place on horseback. The equestrian exercises, therefore, in which they are continually engaged; the nature of the countries they traverse; vast plains and mountains, pure and exhilarating in

atmospheric qualities; seem to make them physically and mentally a more lively and mercurial race than the fur traders and trappers of former days, the self-vaunting "men of the north." A man who bestrides a horse, must be essentially different from a man who cowers in a canoe. We find them, accordingly, hardy, lithe, vigorous, and active; extravagant in word, and thought, and deed; heedless of hardship; daring of danger; prodigal of the present, and thoughtless of the future.

A difference is to be perceived even between these mountain hunters and those of the lower regions along the waters of the Missouri. The latter, generally French creoles, live comfortably in cabins and log huts, well sheltered from the inclemencies of the seasons. They are within the reach of frequent supplies from the settlements; their life is comparatively free from danger, and from most of the vicissitudes of the upper wilderness. The consequence is, that they are less hardy, self-dependant and

game-spirited, than the mountaineer. If the latter by chance comes among them on his way to and from the settlements, he is like a game-cock among the common roosters of the poultry-yard. Accustomed to live in tents, or to bivouac in the open air, he despises the comforts and is impatient of the comfort of the log house. If his meal is not ready in season, he takes his rifle, hies to the forest or the prairie, shoots his own game, lights his fire, and cooks his repast. With his horse and his rifle, he is independent of the world, and spurns at all its restraints. The very superintendents at the lower posts will not put him to mess with the common men, the hirelings of the establishment, but treat him as something superior.

There is, perhaps, no class of men on the face of the earth, says Captain Bonneville, who lead a life of more continued exertion, peril, and excitement, and who are more enamoured of their occupations, than the free trappers of the west. No toil, no danger, no privation can

turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks, and precipices, and wintry torrents oppose his progress; let but a single track of a beaver meet his eye, and he forgets all dangers and defies all difficulties.

At times, he may be seen with his traps on his shoulder, buffeting his way across rapid streams, amidst floating blocks of ice: at other times, he is to be found with his traps swung on his back clambering the most rugged mountains, scaling or descending the most frightful precipices, searching, by routes inaccessible to the horse, and never before trodden by white man, for springs and lakes unknown to his comrades, and where he may meet with his favourite game. Such is the mountaineer, the hardy trapper of the west; and such, as we have slightly sketched it, is the wild, Robin Hood kind of life, with all its strange and motley po-

pulace, now existing in full vigour among the Rocky mountains.

Having thus given the reader some idea of the actual state of the fur trade in the interior of our vast continent, and made him acquainted with the wild chivalry of the mountains, we will no longer delay the introduction of Captain Bonneville and his band into this field of their enterprise, but launch them at once upon the perilous plains of the far west.

CHAPTER II.

DEPARTURE FROM FORT OSAGE—MODES OF TRANSPORTATION—PACK-HORSES—WAGGONS—WALKER AND CERRE—THEIR CHARACTERS—BUOYANT FEELINGS ON LAUNCHING UPON THE PRAIRIES—WILD EQUIPMENTS OF THE TRAPPERS—THEIR GAMBOLS AND ANTICS—DIFFERENCE OF CHARACTER BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH TRAPPERS—AGENCY OF THE KANSAS—GENERAL CLARKE—WHITE PLUME, THE KANSAS CHIEF—NIGHT SCENE IN A TRADER'S CAMP—COLLOQUY BETWEEN WHITE PLUME AND THE CAPTAIN—BEE HUNTERS—THEIR EXPEDITIONS—THEIR FEUDS WITH THE INDIANS—BARGAINING TALENT OF WHITE PLUME.

It was on the first of May, 1832, that Captain Bonneville took his departure from the frontier post of Fort Osage, on the Missouri. He had enlisted a party of one hundred and ten men, most of whom had been in the Indian country, and some of whom were experienced

hunters and trappers. Fort Osage, and other places on the borders of the western wilderness, abound with characters of the kind, ready for any expedition.

The ordinary mode of transportation in these great inland expeditions of the fur traders is on mules and pack-horses; but Captain Bonneville substituted waggons. Though he was to travel through a trackless wilderness, yet the greater part of his route would lie across open plains, destitute of forests, and where wheel carriages can pass in every direction. The chief difficulty occurs in passing the deep ravines cut through the prairies by streams and winter torrents. Here it is often necessary to dig a road down the banks, and to make bridges for the waggons.

In transporting his baggage in vehicles of this kind, Captain Bonneville thought he would save the great delay caused every morning by packing the horses, and the labour of unpacking in the evening. Fewer horses also would be required, and less risk incurred of their wan-

dering away, or being frightened or carried off by the Indians. The waggons, also, would be more easily defended, and might form a kind of fortification in case of attack in the open prairies. A train of twenty waggons, drawn by oxen, or by four mules or horses each, and laden with merchandise, ammunition, and provisions, were disposed in two columns in the centre of the party, which was equally divided, into a van and a rear guard.

As sub-leaders or lieutenants in his expedition, Captain Bonneville had made choice of Mr. I. R. Walker and Mr. M. S. Cerré. The former was a native of Tennessee, about six feet high, strong built, dark complexioned, brave in spirit, though mild in manners. He had resided for many years in Missouri, on the frontier; had been among the earliest adventurers to Santa Fe, where he went to trap beaver, and was taken by the Spaniards. Being liberated, he engaged with the Spaniards and Sioux Indians in a war against the Pawnees; then re-

turned to Missouri, and had acted by turns as sheriff, trader, trapper, until he was enlisted as a leader by Captain Bonneville. Cerré, his other leader, had likewise been in expeditions to Santa Fe, in which he had endured much hardship. He was of the middle size, light complexioned, and though but about twenty-five years of age, was considered an experienced Indian trader.

It was a great object with Captain Bonneville to get to the mountains before the summer heats and summer flies should render the travelling across the prairies distressing; and before the annual assemblages of people connected with the fur trade, should have broken up, and dispersed to the hunting grounds.

The two rival associations already mentioned, the American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, had their several places of rendezvous for the present year at no great distance apart, in Pierre's Hole, a deep valley in the heart of the mountains, and thither Captain Bonneville intended to shape his course.

It is not easy to do justice to the exulting feelings of the worthy captain, at finding himself at the head of a stout band of hunters, trappers, and woodmen; fairly launched on the broad prairies, with his face to the boundless west. The tamest inhabitant of cities, the veriest spoiled child of civilization, feels his heart dilate and his pulse beat high, on finding himself on horseback in the glorious wilderness; what then must be the excitement of one whose imagination had been stimulated by a residence on the frontier, and to whom the wilderness was a region of romance!

His hardy followers partook of his excitement. Most of them had already experienced the wild freedom of savage life, and looked forward to a renewal of past scenes of adventure and exploit. Their very appearance and equipment exhibited a piebald mixture, half civilized and half savage. Many of them looked more like Indians than white men, in their garbs and accoutrements, and their very horses were caparisoned

in barbaric style, with fantastic trappings. The outset of a band of adventurers on one of these expeditions is always animated and joyous.

The welkin rang with their shouts and yelps, after the manner of the savages; and with boisterous jokes and light-hearted laughter. As they passed the straggling hamlets and solitary cabins that fringe the skirts of the frontiers, they would startle their inmates by Indian yells and war-whoops, or regale them with grotesque feats of Indian horsemanship, well suited to their half savage appearance. Most of these abodes were inhabited by men who had themselves been in similar expeditions: they welcomed the travellers, therefore, as brother trappers, treated them with a hunter's hospitality, and cheered them with an honest God speed at parting.

And here we would remark a great difference, in point of character and quality, between the two classes of trappers, the "American" and "French," as they are called in contradistinc-

tion. The latter is meant to designate the French creole of Canada or Louisiana; the former, the trapper of the old American stock, from Kentucky, Tennessee, and others of the western states. The French trapper is represented as a lighter, softer, more self-indulgent kind of man. He must have his Indian wife, his lodge, and his petty conveniences. He is gay and thoughtless, takes little heed of landmarks, depends upon his leaders and companions to think for the common weal, and, if left to himself, is easily perplexed and lost.

The American trapper stands by himself, and is peerless for the service of the wilderness. Drop him in the midst of a prairie, or in the heart of the mountains, and he is never at a loss. He notices every landmark; can retrace his route through the most monotonous plains, or the most perplexed labyrinths of the mountains; no danger nor difficulty can appal him, and he scorns to complain under any privation. In equipping the two kinds of trappers, the creole

and Canadian are apt to prefer the light fusee; the American always grasps the rifle: he despises what he calls the "shot-gun."

We give these estimates on the authority of a trader of long experience, and a foreigner by birth. "I consider one American," said he, "equal to three Canadians, in point of sagacity, aptness at resources, self-dependence, and fearlessness of spirit. In fact, no one can cope with him him as a stark tramper of the wilderness."

Beside the two classes of trappers just mentioned, Captain Bonneville had enlisted several Delaware Indians in his employ, on whose hunting qualifications he placed great reliance.

On the 6th of May the travellers passed the last border habitation, and bade a long farewell to the ease and security of civilization. The buoyant and clamorous spirits with which they had commenced their march, gradually subsided as they entered upon its difficulties. They found the prairies saturated with the heavy cold rains, prevalent in certain seasons of the year in this

part of the country. The waggon wheels sank deep in the mire, the horses were often to the fetlock, and both steed and rider were completely jaded by the evening of the 12th, when they reached the Kansas river; a fine stream about three hundred yards wide, entering the Missouri from the south. Though fordable in almost every part at the end of summer and during the antumn, yet it was necessary to construct a raft for the transportation of the waggons and effects.

All this was done in the course of the following day, and by evening, the whole party arrived at the agency of the Kansas tribe. This was under the superintendence of General Clarke, brother of the celebrated traveller of the same name, who, with Lewis, made the first expedition down the waters of the Columbia. He was living like a patriarch, surrounded by labourers and interpreters, all snugly housed, and provided with excellent farms.

The functionary next in consequence to the agent, was the blacksmith, a most important, and, indeed, indispensable personage in a frontier community. The Kansas resemble the Osages in features, dress, and language: they raise corn and hunt the buffalo, ranging the Kansas river, and its tributary streams; at the time of the captain's visit, they were at war with the Pawnees of the Nebraska, or Platte river.

The unusual sight of a train of waggons, caused quite a sensation among these savages, who thronged about the caravan, examining every thing minutely, and asking a thousand questions: exhibiting a degree of excitability, and a lively curiosity, totally opposite to that apathy with which their race is so often reproached.

The personage who most attracted the captain's attention at this place, was "White Plume," the Kansas chief, and they soon became good friends. White Plume (we are pleased

with his chivalrous *soubriquet*) inhabited a large stone house, built for him by order of the American government: but the establishment had not been carried out in correspondent style. It might be palace without, but it was wigwam within; so that, between the stateliness of his mansion, and the squalidness of his furniture, the gallant White Plume presented some such whimsical incongruity as we see in the gala equipments of an Indian chief, on a treaty-making embassy at Washington, who has been generously decked out in cocked hat and military coat, in contrast to his breech-clout and leathern leggings; being grand officer at top and ragged Indian at bottom.

White Plume was so taken with the courtesy of the captain, and pleased with one or two presents received from him, that he accompanied him a day's journey on his march, and passed a night in his camp, on the margin of a small stream.

The method of encamping generally observed

by the captain, was as follows: The twenty waggons were disposed in a square, at the distance of thirty-three feet from each other. In every interval there was a mess stationed; and each mess had its fire, where the men cooked, ate, gossiped, and slept. The horses were placed in the centre of the square, with a guard stationed over them at night.

The horses were "side lined," as it is termed: that is to say, the fore and hind foot on the same side of the animal were tied together, so as to be within eighteen inches of each other. A horse thus fettered is for a time sadly embarrassed, but soon becomes sufficiently accustomed to the restraint to move about slowly. It prevents his wandering, and his being easily carried off at night by lurking Indians. When a horse that is "foot free," is tied to one thus secured, the latter forms, as it were, a pivot, round which the other runs and curvets, in case of alarm.

The encampment of which we are speaking,

presented a striking scene. The various mess-fires were surrounded by picturesque groups, standing, sitting, and reclining; some busied in cooking, others in cleaning their weapons: while the frequent laugh told that the rough joke, or merry story was going on. In the middle of the camp, before the principal lodge, sat the two chieftains, Captain Bonneville and White Plume, in soldier-like communion, the captain delighted with the opportunity of meeting on social terms, with one of the red warriors of the wilderness, the unsophisticated children of nature. The latter was squatted on his buffalo robe, his strong features and red skin glaring in the broad light of a blazing fire, while he recounted astounding tales of the bloody exploits of his tribe and himself, in their wars with the Pawnees; for there are no old soldiers more given to long campaigning stories than Indian "braves."

The feuds of White Plume, however, had not been confined to the red men; he had much to say of brushes with bee hunters, a class of of-

fenders for whom he seemed to cherish a particular abhorrence. As the species of hunting prosecuted by these worthies is not laid down in any of the ancient books of venerie, and is, in fact, peculiar to our western frontier, a word or two on the subject may not be unacceptable to the reader.

The bee hunter is generally some settler on the verge of the prairies; a long, lank fellow, of fever and ague complexion, acquired from living on new soil, and in a hut built of green logs. In the autumn, when the harvest is over, these frontier settlers form parties of two or three, and prepare for a bee hunt. Having provided themselves with a waggon, and a number of empty casks, they sally off, armed with their rifles, into the wilderness, directing their course east, west, north, or south, without any regard to the ordinance of the American government, which strictly forbids all trespass upon the lands belonging to the Indian tribes.

The belts of woodland that traverse the lower prairies, and border the rivers, are peopled by innumerable swarms of wild bees, which make their hives in hollow trees, and fill them with honey tolled from the rich flowers of the prairies. The bees, according to popular assertion, are migrating like the settlers, to the west. An Indian trader, well experienced in the country, informs us that within ten years that he has passed in the far west, the bee has advanced westward above a hundred miles. It is said on the Missouri, that the wild turkey and the wild bee go up the river together: neither are found in the upper regions. It is but recently that the wild turkey has been killed on the Nebraska, or Platte; and his travelling competitor, the wild bee, appeared there about the same time.

Be all this as it may: the course of our party of bee hunters, is to make a wide circuit through the woody river bottoms, and the patches of forest on the prairies, marking, as they go out,

every tree in which they have detected a hive. These marks are generally respected by any other bee hunter that should come upon their track. When they have marked sufficient to fill all their casks, they turn their faces homeward, cut down the trees as they proceed, and having loaded their waggon with honey and wax, return well pleased to the settlements.

Now it so happens that the Indians relish wild honey as highly as do the white men, and are the more delighted with this natural luxury from its having, in many instances, but recently made its appearance in their lands. The consequence is, numberless disputes and conflicts between them and the bee hunters: and often a party of the latter, returning, laden with rich spoil, from one of their forays, are apt to be waylaid by the native lords of the soil; their honey to be seized, their harness cut to pieces, and themselves left to find their way home the

best way they can, happy to escape with no greater personal harm than a sound rib-roasting.

Such were the marauders of whose offences the gallant White Plume made the most bitter complaint. They were chiefly the settlers of the western part of the Missouri, who are the most famous bee hunters on the frontier, and whose favourite hunting ground lies within the lands of the Kansas tribe. According to the account of White Plume, however, matters were pretty fairly balanced between him and the offenders; he having as often treated them to a taste of the bitter, as they had robbed him of the sweets.

It is but justice to this gallant chief to say, that he gave proofs of having acquired some of the lights of civilization from his proximity to the whites, as was evinced in his knowledge of driving a bargain. He required hard cash in return for some corn with which he supplied

the worthy captain, and left the latter at a loss which most to admire, his native chivalry as a brave, or his acquired adroitness as a trader.

CHAPTER III.

WIDE PRAIRIES—VEGETABLE PRODUCTIONS—TABULAR HILLS—SLABS OF SANDSTONE—NEBRASKA OR PLATTE RIVER—SCANTY FARE—BUFFALO SKULLS—WAGGONS TURNED INTO BOATS—HERDS OF BUFFALO—CLIFFS RESEMBLING CASTLES—THE CHIMNEY—SCOTT'S BLUFFS—STORY CONNECTED WITH THEM—THE BIGHORN OR AHSAHTA—ITS NATURE AND HABITS—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THAT AND THE "WOOLLY SHEEP," OR GOAT OF THE MOUNTAINS.

FROM the middle to the end of May, Captain Bonneville pursued a western course, over vast undulating plains, destitute of tree or shrub, rendered miry by occasional rain, and cut up by deep water courses, where they had to dig roads for their waggons down the soft crumbling banks, and to throw bridges across

the streams. The weather had attained the summer heat; the thermometer standing about fifty-seven degrees in the morning, early, but rising to about ninety degrees at noon. The incessant breezes, however, which sweep these vast plains, render the heat endurable.

Game was scanty, and they had to eke out their scanty fare with wild roots and vegetables, such as the Indian potato, the wild onion, and the prairie tomato, and they met with quantities of "red root," from which the hunters make a very palatable beverage. The only human being that crossed their path was a Kansas warrior, returning from some solitary expedition of bravado or revenge, bearing a Pawnee scalp as a trophy.

The country gradually rose as they proceeded westward, and their route took them over high ridges, commanding wide and beautiful prospects. The vast plain was studded on the west with innumerable hills of conical shape, such as are seen north of the Arkansas river. These

hills have their summits apparently cut off about the same elevation, so as to leave flat surfaces at top. It is conjectured by some, that the whole country may originally have been of the altitude of these tabular hills; but through some process of nature may have sunk to its present level; these insulated eminences being protected by broad foundations of solid rock.

Captain Bonneville mentions another geological phenomenon north of Red river, where the surface of the earth, in considerable tracts of country, is covered with broad slabs of sandstone, having the form and position of gravestones, and looking as if they had been forced up by some subterranean agitation. "The resemblance," says he, "which these very remarkable spots have in many places to old churchyards is curious in the extreme. One might almost fancy himself among the tombs of the pre-Adamites."

On the 2d of June, they arrived on the main

stream of the Nebraska or Platte river; twenty-five miles below the head of the Great island. The low banks of this river give it an appearance of great width. Captain Bonneville measured it in one place, and found it twenty-two hundred yards from bank to bank. Its depth was from three to six feet, the bottom full of quicksands. The Nebraska is studded with islands covered with that species of poplar called the cotton-wood tree.

Keeping up along the course of this river for several days, they were obliged, from the scarcity of game, to put themselves upon short allowance, and, occasionally, to kill a steer. They bore their daily labours and privations, however, with great good humour, taking their tone, in all probability, from the buoyant spirit of their leader.

"If the weather was inclement," says the captain, "we watched the clouds, and hoped for a sight of the blue sky and the merry sun. If

food was scanty, we regaled ourselves with the hope of soon falling in with herds of buffalo, and having nothing to do but slay and eat."

We doubt whether the genial captain is not describing the cheeriness of his own breast, which gave a cheery aspect to every thing around him.

There certainly were evidences, however, that the country was not always equally destitute of game. At one place, they observed a field decorated with buffalo skulls, arranged in circles, curves, and other mathematical figures, as if for some mystic rite or ceremony. They were almost innumerable, and seemed to have been a vast hecatomb offered up in thanksgiving to the Great Spirit for some signal success in the chase.

On the 11th of June, they came to the fork of Nebraska, where it divides itself into two equal and beautiful streams. One of these branches rises in the west south-west, near the head waters of the Arkansas. Up the course

of this branch, as Captain Bonneville was well aware, lay the route to the Camanche and Kioway Indians, and to the northern Mexican settlements; of the other branch he knew nothing. Its sources might lie among wild and inaccessible cliffs, and tumble and foam down rugged defiles and over craggy precipices; but its direction was in the true course, and up this stream he determined to prosecute his route to the Rocky mountains. Finding it impossible, from quicksands and other dangerous impediments, to cross the river in this neighbourhood, he kept up along the south fork for two days, merely seeking a safe fording place.

At length he encamped, caused the bodies of the waggons to be dislodged from the wheels, covered with buffalo hides, and besmeared with a compound of tallow and ashes; thus forming rude boats. In these they ferried their effects across the stream, which was six hundred yards wide, with a swift and strong current. Three men were in each boat, to manage it; others

waded across, pushing the barks before them. Thus all crossed in safety. A march of nine miles took them over high rolling prairies to the north fork; their eyes being regaled with the welcome sight of herds of buffalo at a distance, some careering the plain, others grazing and reposing in the natural meadows.

Skirting along the north fork for a day or two, excessively annoyed by musquitoes and buffalo gnats, they reached, in the evening of the 17th, a small but beautiful grove, from which issued the confused notes of singing birds, the first they had heard since crossing the boundary of Missouri. After so many days of weary travelling, through a naked, monotonous and silent country, it was delightful once more to hear the song of the bird, and to behold the verdure of the grove. It was a beautiful sunset, and a sight of the glowing rays, mantling the tree-tops and rustling branches, seemed to gladden every heart. They pitched their camp in the grove, kindled their

fires, partook merrily of their rude fare, and resigned themselves to the sweetest sleep they had enjoyed since their outset upon the prairies.

The country now became rugged and broken. High bluffs advanced upon the river, and forced the travellers occasionally to leave its banks and wind their course into the interior. In one of the wild and solitary passes, they were startled by the trail of four or five pedestrians, whom they supposed to be spies from some predatory camp of either Arickara or Crow Indians. This obliged them to redouble their vigilance at night, and to keep especial watch upon their horses.

In these rugged and elevated regions they began to see the black-tailed deer, a species larger than the ordinary kind, and chiefly found in rocky and mountainous countries. They had reached also a great buffalo range; Captain Bonneville ascended a high bluff, commanding an extensive view of the surrounding plains. As far as his eye could reach, the country

seemed absolutely blackened by innumerable herds. No language, he says, could convey an adequate idea of the vast living mass thus presented to his eye. He remarked that the bulls and cows generally congregated in separate herds.

Opposite to the camp at this place, was a singular phenomenon, which is among the curiosities of the country. It is called the chimney. The lower part is a conical mound, rising out of the naked plain; from the summit shoots up a shaft or column, about one hundred and twenty feet in height, from which it derives its name. The height of the whole, according to Captain Bonneville, is a hundred and seventy-five yards. It is composed of indurated clay, with alternate layers of red and white sandstone, and may be seen at the distance of upwards of thirty miles.

On the 21st, they encamped amidst high and beetling cliffs of indurated clay and sandstone, bearing the semblance of towers, castles,

churches, and fortified cities. At a distance, it was scarcely possible to persuade oneself, that the works of art were not mingled with these fantastic freaks of nature. They have received the name of Scott's bluffs, from a melancholy circumstance. A number of years since, a party were descending the upper part of the river in canoes, when their frail barks were overturned and all their powder spoiled. Their rifles being thus rendered useless, they were unable to procure food by hunting, and had to depend upon roots and wild fruits for subsistence. After suffering extremely from hunger, they arrived at Larimie's Fork, a small tributary of the north branch of the Nebraska, about sixty miles above the cliffs just mentioned. Here one of the party, by the name of Scott, was taken ill; and his companions came to a halt, until he should recover health and strength sufficient to proceed.

While they were searching round in quest of edible roots, they discovered a fresh trail of

white men, who had evidently but recently preceded them. What was to be done? By a forced march they might overtake this party, and thus be able to reach the settlements in safety. Should they linger, they might all perish of famine and exhaustion. Scott, however, was incapable of moving; they were too feeble to aid him forward, and dreaded that such a clog would prevent their coming up with the advance party. They determined, therefore, to abandon him to his fate. Accordingly, under pretence of seeking food, and such simples as might be efficacious in his malady, they deserted him, and hastened forward upon the trail. They succeeded in overtaking the party of which they were in quest, but concealed their faithless desertion of Scott; alleging that he had died of disease.

On the ensuing summer, these very individuals visiting these parts in company with others, came suddenly upon the bleached bones

and grinning skull of a human skeleton, which, by certain signs they recognised for the remains of Scott. This was sixty long miles from the place where they had abandoned him; and it appeared that the wretched man had crawled that immense distance before death put an end to his miseries. The wild and picturesque bluffs in the neighbourhood of his lonely grave have ever since borne his name.

Amidst this wild and striking scenery, Captain Bonneville, for the first time, beheld flocks of the ahsahta or bighorn, an animal which frequents these cliffs in great numbers. They accord with the nature of such scenery, and add much to its romantic effect; bounding like goats from crag to crag, often trooping along the lofty shelves of the mountains, under the guidance of some venerable patriarch, with horns twisted lower than his muzzle, and sometimes peering over the edge of a precipice, so high that they appear scarce bigger than crows;

indeed, it seems a pleasure to them to seek the most rugged and frightful situations, doubtless from a feeling of security.

This animal is commonly called the mountain sheep, and is often confounded with another animal, the "woolly sheep," found more to the northward, about the country of the Flatheads. The latter likewise inhabits cliffs in summer, but descends into the valleys in the winter. It has white wool, like a sheep, mingled with a thin growth of long hair; but it has short legs, a deep belly, and a beard like a goat. Its horns are about five inches long, slightly curved backwards, black as jet, and beautifully polished. Its hoofs are of the same colour. This animal is by no means so active as the bighorn; it does not bound much, but sits a good deal upon its haunches. It is not so plentiful either; rarely more than two or three are seen at a time. Its wool alone gives it a resemblance to the sheep; it is more properly of the goat genus. The flesh is said to have a

musty flavour; some have thought the fleece might be valuable, as it is said to be as fine as that of the goat of Cashmere, but it is not to be procured in sufficient quantities.

The ahsahta, argali, or bighorn, on the contrary, has short hair like a deer, and resembles it in shape, but has the head and horns of a sheep, and its flesh is said to be delicious mutton. The Indians consider it more sweet and delicate than any other kind of venison. It abounds in the Rocky mountains, from the fiftieth degree of north latitude, quite down to California; generally in the highest regions capable of vegetation; sometimes it ventures into the valleys, but on the least alarm, regains its favourite cliffs and precipices, where it is perilous, if not impossible for the hunter to follow.*

* Dimensions of a male of this species, from the nose to the base of the tail, five feet; length of the tail, four inches; girth of the body, four feet; height, three feet eight inches; the horn, three feet six inches long; one foot three inches in circumference at base.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ALARM—CROW INDIANS—THEIR APPEARANCE—MODE OF APPROACH—THEIR VENGEFUL ERRAND—THEIR CURIOSITY—HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE CROWS AND BLACKFEET—LOVING CONDUCT OF THE CROWS—LARAMIE'S FORK—FIRST NAVIGATION OF THE NEBRASKA—GREAT ELEVATION OF THE COUNTRY—RARETY OF THE ATMOSPHERE—ITS EFFECT ON THE WOOD-WORK OF THE WAGGONS—BLACK HILLS—THEIR WILD AND BROKEN SCENERY—INDIAN DOGS—CROW TROPHIES—STERIL AND DREARY COUNTRY—BANKS OF THE SWEET WATER—BUFFALO HUNTING—ADVENTURE OF TOM CAIN, THE IRISH COOK.

When on the march, Captain Bonneville always sent some of his best hunters in the advance to reconnoitre the country, as well as to look out for game. On the 24th of May, as the caravan was slowly journeying up the banks of the Nebraska, the hunters came galloping back, waving their caps, and giving the alarm cry, "Indians! Indians!"

The captain immediately ordered a halt: the hunters now came up and announced that a large war-party of Crow Indians were just above, on the river. The captain knew the character of these savages; one of the most roving, warlike, crafty, and predatory tribes of the mountains; horse-stealers of the first order, and easily provoked to acts of sanguinary violence. Orders were accordingly given to prepare for action, and every one promptly took the post that had been assigned him, in the general order of the march, in all cases of warlike emergency.

Every thing being put in battle array, the captain took the lead of his little band, and moved on slowly and warily. In a little while he beheld the Crow warriors emerging from among the bluffs. There were about sixty of them; fine martial-looking fellows, painted and arrayed for war, and mounted on horses decked out with all kinds of wild trappings. They came prancing along in gallant style, with many wild

and dexterous evolutions, for none can surpass them in horsemanship; and their bright colours, and flaunting and fantastic embellishments, glaring and sparkling in the morning sunshine, gave them really a striking appearance.

Their mode of approach, to one not acquainted with the tactics and ceremonies of this rude chivalry of the wilderness, had an air of direct hostility. They came galloping forward in a body as if about to make a furious charge, but, when close at hand, opened to the right and left, and wheeled in wild circles round the travellers, whooping and yelling like maniacs.

This done, their mock fury sank into a calm, and the chief approaching the captain, who had remained warily drawn up, though informed of the pacific nature of the manœuvre, extended to him the hand of friendship. The pipe of peace was smoked, and now all was good fellowship.

The Crows were in pursuit of a band of Cheyennes, who had attacked their village in

the night, and killed one of their people. They had already been five-and-twenty days on the track of the marauders, and were determined not to return home until they had sated their revenge.

A few days previously, some of their scouts, who were ranging the country at a distance from the main body, had discovered the party of Captain Bonneville. They had dogged it for a time in secret, astonished at the long train of waggons and oxen, and especially struck with the sight of a cow and calf, quietly following the caravan; supposing them to be some kind of tame buffalo. Having satisfied their curiosity, they had carried back to their chief intelligence of all that they had seen. He had, in consequence, diverged from his pursuit of vengeance to behold the wonders described to him.

"Now that we have met you," said he to Captain Bonneville, "and have seen these marvels with our own eyes, our hearts are glad." In fact, nothing could exceed the curiosity

evinced by these people as to the objects before them. Waggons had never been seen by them before, and they examined them with the greatest minuteness; but the calf was the peculiar object of their admiration. They watched it with intense interest as it licked the hands accustomed to feed it, and were struck with the mild expression of its countenance, and its perfect docility.

After much sage consultation, they at length determined that it must be the "great medicine" of the white party: an application given by the Indians to any thing of supernatural and mysterious power, that is guarded as a talisman. They were completely thrown out in their conjecture, however, by an offer of the white men to exchange the calf for a horse; their estimation of the great medicine sunk in an instant, and they declined the bargain.

At the request of the Crow chieftain the two parties encamped together, and passed the residue of the day in company. The captain

was well pleased with every opportunity to gain a knowledge of the "unsophisticated sons of nature," that had so long been objects of his poetic speculations; and indeed this wild, horse-stealing tribe, is one of the most notorious of the mountains.

The chief, of course, had his scalps to show and his battles to recount. The Blackfoot is the hereditary enemy of the Crow, towards whom hostility is like a cherished principle of religion; for every tribe, beside its casual antagonists, has some enduring foe with whom there can be no permanent reconciliation. The Crows and Blackfeet, upon the whole, are enemies worthy of each other, being rogues and ruffians of the first water. As their predatory excursions extend over the same regions, they often come in contact with each other, and these casual conflicts serve to keep their wits awake and their passions alive.

The present party of Crows, however, evinced nothing of the invidious character for which

they are renowned. During the day and night that they were encamped in company with the travellers, their conduct was friendly in the extreme. They were, in fact, quite irksome in their attentions, and had a caressing manner at times quite importunate. It was not until after separation on the following morning, that the captain and his men ascertained the secret of all this loving kindness. In the course of their fraternal caresses, the Crows had contrived to empty the pockets of their white brothers; to abstract the very buttons from their coats, and, above all, to make free with their hunting knives.

By equal altitudes of the sun, taken at this last encampment, Captain Bonneville ascertained his latitude to be 41° 47′ north. The thermometer, at six o'clock in the morning, stood at fifty-nine degrees; at two o'clock, P.M., at ninety-two degrees; and at six o'clock in the evening, at seventy degrees.

The Black hills, or mountains, now began to

be seen at a distance, printing the horizon with their rugged and broken outlines; and threatening to oppose a difficult barrier in the way of the travellers.

On the 26th of May, the travellers encamped at Laramie's fork, a clear and beautiful stream, rising in the west-south-west, maintaining an average width of twenty yards, and winding through broad meadows abounding in currants and gooseberries, and adorned with groves and clumps of trees.

By an observation of Jupiter's satellites, with a Dolland reflecting telescope, Captain Bonville ascertained the longitude to be 102° 57′ west of Greenwich.

We will here step ahead of our narrative to observe, that about three years after the time of which we are treating, Mr. Robert Campbell, formerly of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, descended the Platte from this fork, in skin canoes, thus proving, what had always been discredited, that the river was navigable. About

the same time, he built a fort or trading post at Laramie's fork, which he named Fort William, after his friend and partner, Mr. William Sublette. Since that time, the Platte has become a highway for the fur traders.

For some days past, Captain Bonneville had been made sensible of the great elevation of country into which he was gradually ascending, by the effect of the dryness and rarefaction of the atmosphere upon his waggons. The woodwork shrunk; the paint boxes of the wheels were continually working out, and it was necessary to support the spokes by stout props to prevent their falling asunder.

The travellers were now entering one of those great steppes of the far west, where the prevalent aridity of the atmosphere renders the country unfit for cultivation. In these regions, there is a fresh sweet growth of grass in the spring, but it is scanty and short, and parches up in the course of the summer, so that there is none for the hunters to set fire to in the

autumn. It is a common observation, that "above the forks of the Platte the grass does not burn." All attempts at agriculture and gardening in the neighbourhood of Fort William, have been attended with very little success. The grain and vegetables raised there have been scanty in quantity and poor in quality. The great elevation of these plains, and the dryness of the atmosphere, will tend to retain these immense regions in a state of pristine wildness.

In the course of a day or two more, the travellers entered that wild and broken tract of the Crow country called the Black hills, and here their journey became toilsome in the extreme. Rugged steeps and deep ravines incessantly obstructed their progress, so that a great part of the day was spent in the painful toil of digging through banks, filling up ravines, forcing the waggons up the most forbidding ascents, or swinging them with ropes down the face of dangerous precipices. The shoes of

their horses were worn out, and their feet injured by the rugged and stony roads. The travellers were annoyed also by frequent but brief storms, which would come hurrying over the hills, or through the mountain defiles, rage with great fury for a short time, and then pass off, leaving every thing calm and serene again.

For several nights the camp had been infested by vagabond Indian dogs, prowling about in quest of food. They were about the size of a large pointer; with ears short and erect, and a long bushy tail—altogether they bore a striking resemblance to a wolf. These skulking visiters would keep about the purlieus of the camp until daylight; when, on the first stir of life among the sleepers, they would scamper off until they reached some rising ground, where they would take their seats, and keep a sharp and hungry watch upon every movement. The moment the travellers were fairly on the march, and the camp was abandoned, these starveling hangers-on

would hasten to the deserted fires, to seize upon the half-picked bones, the offals and garbage that lay about; and, having made a hasty meal, with many a snap and snarl and growl, would follow leisurely on the trail of the caravan. Many attempts were made to coax or catch them, but in vain. Their quick and suspicious eyes caught the slightest sinister movement, and they turned and scampered off.

At length one was taken. He was terribly alarmed, and crouched and trembled as if expecting instant death. Soothed, however, by caresses, he began after a time to gather confidence and wag his tail, and at length was brought to follow close at the heels of his captors; still, however, darting around furtive and suspicious glances, and evincing a disposition to scamper off upon the least alarm.

On the first of July, the band of Crow warriors again crossed their path. They came in vaunting and vainglorious style; displaying five Cheyenne scalps, the trophies of their venge-

ance. They were now bound homewards, to appease the manes of their comrade by these proofs that his death had been revenged, and intended to have scalp-dances and other triumphant rejoicings. Captain Bonneville and his men, however, were by no means disposed to renew their confiding intimacy with these crafty savages, and above all, took care to avoid their pilfering caresses. They remarked one precaution of the Crows with respect to their horses; to protect their hoofs from the sharp and jagged rocks among which they had to pass, they had covered them with shoes constructed of buffalo hide.

The route of the travellers lay generally along the course of the Nebraska or Platte; but occasionally, where steep promontories advanced to the margin of the stream, they were obliged to make inland circuits. One of these took them through a bold and stern country, bordered by a range of low moutains, running east and west. Every thing around bore traces of some fearful

convulsion of nature in times long past. Hitherto the various strata of rock had exhibited a gentle elevation towards the south-west, but here every thing appeared to have been subverted, and thrown out of place. In many places there were heavy beds of white sandstone resting upon red. Immense strata of rocks jutted up into crags and cliffs; and sometimes formed perpendicular walls and overhanging precipices.

An air of sterility prevailed over these savage wastes. The valleys were destitute of herbage, and scantily clothed with a stunted species of wormwood, generally known among traders and trappers by the name of sage. From an elevated point of their march through this region, the travellers caught a beautiful view of the Powder river mountains away to the north, stretching along the very verge of the horizon, and seeming, from the snow with which they were mantled to be a chain of small white clouds, connecting sky and earth.

Though the thermometer at mid-day ranged from eighty to ninety, and even sometimes rose to ninety-three degrees, yet occasional spots of snow were to be seen on the tops of the low mountains, among which the travellers were journeying; proofs of the great elevation of the whole region.

The Nebraska, in its passage through the Black hills, is confined to a much narrower channel than that through which it flows, in the plains below; but it is deeper and clearer, and rushes with a stronger current. The scenery, also, is more varied and beautiful. Sometimes it glides rapidly, but smoothly, through a picturesque valley, between wooded banks; then, forcing its way into the bosom of rugged mountains, it rushes impetuously through narrow defiles, roaring and foaming down rocks and rapids, until it is again soothed to rest in some peaceful valley.

On the 12th of July, Captain Bonneville abandoned the main stream of the Nebraska,

which was continually shouldered by rugged promontories, and making a bend to the south-west for a couple of days, part of the time over plains of loose sand, encamped on the 14th, on the banks of the Sweet Water, a stream about twenty yards in breadth, and four or five feet deep, flowing between low banks over a sandy soil, and forming one of the forks or upper branches of the Nebraska.

Up this stream they now shaped their course for several successive days, tending, generally, to the west. The soil was light and sandy; the country much diversified. Frequently the plains were studded with isolated blocks of rock, sometimes in the shape of a half globe, and from three to four hundred feet high. These singular masses had occasionally a very imposing, and even sublime appearance, rising from the midst of a savage and lonely landscape.

As the travellers continued to advance, they became more and more sensible of the eleva-

tion of the country. The hills around were more generally capped with snow. The men complained of cramps and colics, sore lips and mouths, and violent headaches. The woodwork of the waggons also shrunk so much, that it was with difficulty the wheels were kept from falling to pieces. The country bordering upon the river was frequently gashed with deep ravines, or traversed by high bluffs, to avoid which, the travellers were obliged to make wide circuits through the plains. In the course of these, they came upon immense herds of buffalo, which kept scouring off in the van, like a retreating army.

Among the motley retainers of the camp was Tom Cain, a raw Irishman, who officiated as cook, whose various blunders and expedients in his novel situation, and in the wild scenes and wild kind of life into which he had suddenly been thrown, had made him a kind of butt or droll of the camp. Tom, however, began to discover an ambition superior to his

station; and the conversation of the hunters, and their stories of their exploits, inspired him with a desire to elevate himself to the dignity of their order. The buffalo in such immense droves presented a tempting opportunity for making his first essay. He rode, in the line of march, all prepared for action: his powder flask and shot pouch knowingly slung at the pommel of his saddle, to be at hand; his rifle balanced on his shoulder. While in this plight, a troop of buffalo came trotting by in great alarm. In an instant, Tom sprang from his horse and gave chase on foot. Finding they were leaving him behind, he levelled his rifle and pulled trigger. His shot produced no other effect than to increase the speed of the buffalo, and to frighten his own horse, who took to his heels, and scampered off with all the ammunition. Tom scampered after him, hallooing with might and main, and the wild horse and wild Irishman soon disappeared among the ravines of the prairie.

Captain Bonneville, who was at the head of the line, and had seen the transaction at a distance, detached a party in pursuit of Tom. After a long interval they returned, leading the frightened horse; but though they had scoured the country, and looked out and shouted from every height, they had seen nothing of his rider.

As Captain Bonneville knew Tom's utter awkwardness and inexperience, and the dangers of a bewildered Irishman in the midst of a prairie, he halted and encamped at an early hour, that there might be a regular hunt for him in the morning.

At early dawn on the following day scouts were sent off in every direction, while the main body, after breakfast, proceeded slowly on its course. It was not until the middle of the afternoon, that the hunters returned with honest Tom mounted behind one of them. They had found him in a complete state of perplexity and amazement. His appearance caused shouts of merriment in the camp,—but Tom for once

could not join in the mirth raised at his expense: he was completely chapfallen, and apparently cured of the hunting mania for the rest of his life.

CHAPTER V.

MAGNIFICENT SCENERY—WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS—TREASURY OF WATERS—A STRAY HORSE—AN INDIAN TRAIL—TROUT STREAMS—THE GREAT GREEN RIVER VALLEY—AN ALARM—A BAND OF TRAPPERS — FONTENELLE, HIS INFORMATION — SUFFERINGS OF THIRST — ENCAMPMENT ON THE SEEDS-KE-DEE — STRATEGY OF RIVAL TRADERS—FORTIFICATION OF THE CAMP—THE BKACKFEET —BANDITTI OF THE MOUNTAINS—THEIR CHARACTER AND HABITS.

It was on the 20th of July, that Captain Bonneville first came in sight of the grand region of his hopes and anticipations, the Rocky mountains. He had been making a bend to the south, to avoid some obstacles along the river, and had attained a high, rocky ridge, when a magnificent prospect burst upon his sight. To the west, rose the Wind river

mountains, with their bleached and snowy summits towering into the clouds. These stretched far to the north-north-west, until they melted away into what appeared to be faint clouds, but which the experienced eyes of the veteran hunters of the party recognised for the rugged mountains of the Yellowstone; at the feet of which extended the wild Crow country, a perilous, though profitable region for the trapper.

To the south-west, the eye ranged over an immense extent of wilderness, with what appeared to be a snowy vapour resting upon its horizon. This, however, was pointed out as another branch of the Great Chippewyan, or Rocky chain; being the Eutaw mountains, at whose basis, the wandering tribe of hunters of the same name pitch their tents.

We can imagine the enthusiasm of the worthy captain, when he beheld the vast and mountainous scene of his adventurous enterprise thus suddenly unveiled before him. We can imagine

with what feelings of awe and admiration he must have contemplated the Wind river sierra, or bed of mountains; that great fountain head, from whose springs, and lakes, and melted snows, some of those mighty rivers take their rise, which wander over hundreds of miles of varied country and clime, and find their way to the opposite waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The Wind river mountains are, in fact, among the most remarkable of the whole Rocky chain; and would appear to be among the loftiest. They form, as it were, a great bed of mountains, about eighty miles in length, and from twenty to thirty in breadth; with rugged peaks, covered with eternal snows, and deep, narrow valleys, full of springs, and brooks, and rock-bound lakes. From this great treasury of waters issue forth limpid streams, that, augmenting as they descend, become main tributaries of the Missouri, on the one side, and the Columbia, on the other; and give rise to

the Seeds-ke-dee Agie, or Green river, the great Colorado of the west, that empties its current into the Gulf of California.

The Wind river mountains are notorious in hunters' and trappers' stories: their rugged defiles, and the rough tracts about their neighbourhood, having been lurking places for the predatory hordes of the mountains, and scenes of rough encounter with Crows and Blackfeet. It was to the west of these mountains, in the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee Agie, or Green river, that Captain Bonneville intended to make a halt, for the purpose of giving repose to his people and his horses, after their weary journeying; and of collecting information as to his future course. This Green river valley, and its immediate neighbourhood, as we have already observed, formed the main point of rendezvous, for the present year, of the rival fur companies, and the motley populace, civilized and savage, connected with them. Several days of rugged travel, however, yet remained for the captain

and his men, before they should encamp in this desired resting place.

On the 21st of July, as they were pursuing their course through one of the meadows of the Sweet Water, they beheld a horse grazing at a little distance. He showed no alarm at their approach, but suffered himself quietly to be taken, evincing a perfect state of tameness. The scouts of the party were instantly on the look out for the owners of this animal; lest some dangerous band of savages might be lurking in the vicinity. After a narrow search, they discovered the trail of an Indian party, which had evidently passed through that neighbourhood but recently. The horse was accordingly taken possession of, as an estray; but a more vigilant watch than usual was kept round the camp at nights, lest his former owners should be upon the prowl.

The travellers had now attained so high an elevation, that on the 23d of July, at daybreak, there was considerable ice in the water-

buckets, and the thermometer stood at twenty-two degrees. The rarety of the atmosphere continued to affect the wood-work of the waggons, and the wheels were incessantly falling to pieces. A remedy was at length devised. The tire of each wheel was taken off; a band of wood was nailed round the exterior of the felloes, the tire was then made red hot, replaced round the wheel, and suddenly cooled with water. By this means, the whole was bound together with great compactness.

The extreme elevation of these great steppes, which range along the feet of the Rocky mountains, take away from the seeming height of their peaks, which yield to few in the known world in point of altitude above the level of the sea.

On the 24th, the travellers took final leave of the Sweet Water, and, keeping westwardly, over a low and very rocky ridge, one of the most southern spurs of the Wind river mountains, they encamped, after a march of seven

hours and a half, on the banks of a small clear stream, running to the south, in which they caught a number of fine trout.

The sight of these fish was hailed with pleasure, as a sign that they had reached the waters which flow into the Pacific; for it is only on the western streams of the Rocky mountains that trout are to be taken. The stream on which they had thus encamped, proved, in effect, to be tributary to the Seeds-ke-dee Agie, or Green river, into which it flowed, at some distance to the south.

Captain Bonneville now considered himself as having fairly passed the crest of the Rocky mountains; and felt some degree of exultation in being the first individual that had crossed, north of the settled provinces of Mexico, from the waters of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific, with waggons. Mr. William Sublette, the enterprising leader of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, had, two or three years previously, reached the valley of the Wind river, which lies

on the north-east of the mountains; but had proceeded with them no further.

A vast valley now spread itself before the travellers, bounded on one side, by the Wind river mountains, and to the west, by a long range of high hills. This, Captain Bonneville was assured by a veteran hunter in his company, was the great valley of the Seeds-ke-dee; and the same informant would fain have persuaded him, that a small stream, three feet deep, which he came to on the 25th, was that river. The captain was convinced, however, that stream was too insignificant to drain that wide valley, and the adjacent mountains: he encamped, therefore, at an early hour, on its borders, that he might take the whole of the next day to reach the main river; which he presumed to flow between him and the distant range of western hills.

On the 26th of July, he commenced his march at an early hour, making directly across the valley, towards the hills in the west; proceeding

at as brisk a rate as the jaded condition of his horses would permit. About eleven o'clock in the morning, a great cloud of dust was descried in the rear, advancing directly on the trail of the party. The alarm was given; they all came to a halt, and held a council of war. Some conjectured that the band of Indians, whose trail they had discovered in the neighbourhood of the stray horse, had been lying in wait for them, in some secret fastness of the mountains; and were about to attack them on the open plain, where they would have no shelter.

Preparations were immediately made for defence; and a scouting party sent off to reconnoitre. They soon came galloping back, making signals that all was well. The cloud of dust was made by a band of fifty or sixty mounted trappers, belonging to the American Fur Company, who soon came up, leading their pack-horses. They were headed by Mr. Fontenelle, an experienced leader, or "partisan," as a chief

of a party is called, in the technical language of the trappers.

Mr. Fontenelle informed Captain Bonneville, that he was on his way from the company's trading post, on the Yellowstone, to the yearly rendezvous, with reinforcements and supplies for their hunting and trading parties beyond the mountains; and that he expected to meet, by appointment, with a band of free trappers in that very neighbourhood. He had fallen upon the trail of Captain Bonneville's party, just after leaving the Nebraska; and, finding that they had frightened off all the game, had been obliged to push on, by forced marches, to avoid famine: both men and horses were, therefore, much travel-worn; but this was no place to halt; the plain before them, he said, was destitute of grass and water, neither of which would be met with short of the Green river, which was yet at a considerable distance. He hoped, he added, as his party were all on

horseback, to reach the river, with hard travelling, by night fall: but he doubted the possibility of Captain Bonneville's arrival there with his waggons, before the day following. Having imparted this information, he pushed forward with all speed.

Captain Bonneville followed on as fast as circumstances would permit. The ground was firm and gravelly; but the horses were too much fatigued to move rapidly. After a long and harassing day's march, without pausing for a noontide meal, they were compelled, at nine o'clock at night, to encamp in an open plain, destitute of water or pasturage.

On the following morning, the horses were turned loose at the peep of day; to slake their thirst, if possible, from the dew collected on the sparse grass, here and there springing up among dry sand banks. The soil of a great part of this Green river valley, is a whitish clay, into which the rain cannot penetrate, but which dries and cracks with the sun. In some places it pro-

duces a salt weed, and grass along the margins of the streams; but the wider expanses of it, are desolate and barren.

It was not until noon, that Captain Bonneville reached the banks of the Seeds-ke-dee, or Colorado of the west; in the mean time, the sufferings of both men and horses had been excessive, and it was with almost frantic eagerness that they hurried to allay their burning thirst, in the limpid current of the river.

Fontenelle and his party had not fared much better: the chief part had managed to reach the river by nightfall, but were nearly knocked up by the exertion; the horses of others sank under them, and they were obliged to pass the night upon the road.

On the following morning, July 27th, Fontenelle moved his camp across the river; while Captain Bonneville proceeded some little distance below, where there was a small but fresh meadow, yielding abundant pasturage. Here the poor jaded horses were turned out to graze,

and take their rest: the weary journey up the mountains had worn them down in flesh and spirit; but this last march across the thirsty plain, had nearly finished them.

The captain had here the first taste of the boasted strategy of the fur trade. During his brief, but social encampment, in company with Fontenelle, that experienced trapper had managed to win over a number of Delaware Indians, whom the captain had brought with him, by offering them four hundred dollars each, for the ensuing autumnal hunt. The captain was somewhat astonished, when he saw these hunters, on whose services he had calculated securely, suddenly pack up their traps, and go over to the rival camp. That he might in some measure, however, be even with his competitor, he despatched two scouts to look out for the band of free trappers, who were to meet Fontenelle in this neighbourhood, and to endeavour to bring them to his camp.

As it would be necessary to remain some time in this neighbourhood, that both men and horses might repose, and recruit their strength; and as it was a region full of danger, Captain Bonneville proceeded to fortify his camp with breastworks of logs and pickets.

These precautions were, at that time, peculiarly necessary, from the bands of Blackfeet Indians which were roving about the neighbourhood. These savages are the most dangerous banditti of the mountains, and the inveterate foe of the trappers. They are Ishmaelites of the first order; always with weapon in hand, ready for action. The young braves of the tribe, who are destitute of property, go to war for booty; to gain horses, and acquire the means of setting up a lodge, supporting a family, and entitling themselves to a seat in the public councils. The veteran warriors fight merely for the love of the thing, and the consequence which success gives them among their people.

They are capital horsemen, and are generally well mounted on short, stout horses, similar to the prairie ponies, to be met with at St. Louis. When on a war party, however, they go on foot, to enable them to skulk through the country with greater secrecy; to keep in thickets and ravines, and use more adroit subterfuges and stratagems. Their mode of warfare is entirely by ambush, surprise, and sudden assaults in the night time. If they succeed in causing a panic, they dash forward with headlong fury: if the enemy is on the alert, and shows no signs of fear, they become wary and deliberate in their movements.

Some of them are armed in the primitive style, with bows and arrows; the greater part have American fusees, made after the fashion of those of the Hudson's Bay Company. These they procure at the trading post of the American Fur Company, on Marias river, where they traffic their peltries, for arms, ammunition, clothing, and trinkets. They are extremely

fond of spiritous liquors and tobacco; for which nuisances they are ready to exchange, not merely their guns and horses, but even their wives and daughters. As they are a treacherous race, and have cherished a lurking hostility to the whites, ever since one of their tribe was killed by Mr. Lewis, the associate of General Clarke, in his exploring expedition across the Rocky mountains, the American Fur Company is obliged constantly to keep at that post a garrison of sixty or seventy men.

Under the general name of Blackfeet, are comprehended several tribes: such as the Surcies, the Peagans, the Blood Indians, and the Gros Ventres of the Prairies: who roam about the southern branches of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, together with some other tribes further north.

The bands infesting the Wind river mountains, and the country adjacent, at the time of which we are treating, were Gros Ventres *of the Prairies*, which are not to be confounded

with Gros Ventres *of the Missouri*, who keep about the *lower* part of that river, and are friendly to the white men.

This hostile band keeps about the head waters of the Missouri, and numbers about nine hundred fighting men. Once in the course of two or three years they abandon their usual abodes, and make a visit to the Arapahoes of the Arkansas. Their route lies either through the Crow country, and the Black hills, or through the lands of the Nez Percés, Flatheads, Bannacks, and Shoshonies. As they enjoy their favorite state of hostility with all these tribes, their expeditions are prone to be conducted in the most lawless and predatory style; nor do they hesitate to extend their maraudings to any party of white men they meet with; following their trails; hovering about their camps; waylaying and dogging the caravans of the free traders, and murdering the solitary trapper. The consequences are, frequent and desperate fights between them and

the "mountaineers," in the wild defiles and fastnesses of the Rocky mountains.

The band in question was, at this time, on their way homeward from one of their customary visits to the Arapahoes; and in the ensuing chapter, we shall treat of some bloody encounters between them and the trappers, which had taken place just before the arrival of Captain Bonneville among the mountains.

CHAPTER VI.

SUBLETTE AND HIS BAND—ROBERT CAMPBELL—CAPTAIN WYETH AND A BAND OF "DOWN-EASTERS"—YANKEE ENTERPRISE—FITZPATRICK—HIS ADVENTURE WITH THE BLACKFEET—A RENDEZVOUS OF MOUNTAINEERS—THE BATTLE OF PIERRE'S HOLE—AN INDIAN AMBUSCADE—SUBLETTE'S RETURN.

LEAVING Captain Bonneville and his band ensconced within their fortified camp in the Green river valley, we shall step back and accompany a party of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in its progress, with supplies from St. Louis, to the annual rendezvous at Pierre's Hole. This party consisted of sixty men, well mounted, and conducting a line of pack-horses.

They were commanded by Captain William Sublette, a partner in the company, and one of the most active, intrepid, and renowned leaders in this half military kind of service. He was accompanied by his associate in business, and tried companion in danger, Mr. Robert Campbell, one of the pioneers of the trade beyond the mountains, who had commanded trapping parties there in times of the greatest peril.

As these worthy compeers were on their route to the frontier, they fell in with another expedition, likewise on its way to the mountains. This was a party of regular "down-easters," that is to say, people of New England, who, with the all penetrating, and all pervading spirit of their race, were now pushing their way into a new field of enterprise, with which they were totally unacquainted.

The party had been fitted out, and was maintained and commanded by Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, of Boston. This gentleman had con-

ceived an idea, that a profitable fishery for salmon might be established on the Columbia river, and connected with the fur trade. He had, accordingly, invested capital in goods, calculated, as he supposed, for the Indian trade, and had enlisted a number of eastern men in his employ, who had never been in the far west, nor knew any thing of the wilderness. With these he was bravely steering his way across the continent, undismayed by danger, difficulty, or distance, in the same way that a New England coaster and his neighbours will coolly launch forth on a voyage to the Black sea, or a whaling cruise to the Pacific.

With all their national aptitude at expedient and resource, Captain Wyeth and his men felt themselves completely at a loss when they reached the frontier, and found that the wilderness required experience and habitudes, of which they were totally deficient. Not one of the party, except the leader, had ever seen an Indian or handled a rifle; they were without

guide or interpreter, and totally unacquainted with "wood craft," and the modes of making their way among savage hordes, and subsisting themselves, during long marches over wild mountains and barren plains.

In this predicament, Captain Sublette found them, in a manner becalmed, or rather run aground, at the little frontier town of Independence, in Missouri, and kindly took them in tow. The two parties travelled amicably together; the frontier men of Sublette's party gave their Yankee comrades some lessons in hunting, and some insight into the art and mystery of dealing with the Indians, and they all arrived without accident at the upper branches of the Nebraska or Platte river.

In the course of their march, Mr. Fitzpatrick, the partner of the company who was resident at that time beyond the mountains, came down from the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole to meet them, and hurry them forward. He travelled in company with them until they reached the

Sweet Water; then taking a couple of horses, one for the saddle, and the other as a pack-horse, he started off express for Pierre's Hole, to make arrangements against their arrival, that he might commence his hunting campaign before the rival company.

Fitzpatrick was a hardy and experienced mountaineer, and knew all the passes and defiles. As he was pursuing his lonely course up the Green river valley, he descried several horsemen at a distance, and came to a halt to reconnoitre. He supposed them to be some detachment from the rendezvous, or a party of friendly Indians. They perceived him, and setting up the war-whoop, dashed forward at full speed: he saw at once his mistake and his peril—they were Blackfeet.

Springing upon his fleetest horse, and abandoning the other to the enemy, he made for the mountains, and succeeded in escaping up one of the most dangerous defiles. Here he concealed himself for a time, until he thought the

Indians had gone off, when he returned into the valley. He was again pursued, lost his remaining horse, and only escaped by scrambling up among the cliffs. For several days he remained lurking among rocks and precipices, and almost famished, having but one remaining charge in his rifle, which he kept for self-defence.

In the meantime, Sublette and Campbell, with their fellow-traveller, Captain Wyeth, had pursued their march unmolested, and arrived in the Green river valley, totally unconscious that there was any lurking enemy at hand. They had encamped one night on the banks of a small stream, which came down from the Wind river mountains, when, about midnight, a band of Indians suddenly burst upon their camp, with horrible yells and whoops, and a discharge of guns and arrows. Happily no other harm was done than wounding one mule, and causing several horses to break loose from their pickets. The camp was instantly in arms; but the In-

dians retreated with yells of exultation, carrying off several of the horses, under covert of the night.

This was somewhat of a disagreeable foretaste of mountain life to some of Captain Wyeth's band, accustomed only to the regular and peaceful life of New England; nor was it altogether to the taste of Captain Sublette's men, who were chiefly creoles and townsmen from St. Louis. They continued their march the next morning, keeping scouts ahead and upon their flanks, and arrived without further molestation at Pierre's Hole.

The first inquiry of Captain Sublette, on reaching the rendezvous, was for Fitzpatrick. To his great concern he found he had not arrived, nor had any intelligence been received concerning him. Great uneasiness was now entertained, lest that gentleman should have fallen into the hands of the Blackfeet, who had made the midnight attack upon the camp. It was a matter of general joy, therefore, when he

made his appearance, conducted by two half-breed Iroquois hunters. He had lurked for several days among the mountains, until almost starved; at length he escaped the vigilance of his enemies in the night, and was so fortunate as to meet the two Iroquois hunters, who, being on horseback, conveyed him without further difficulty to the rendezvous. He arrived there so emaciated, that he could scarcely be recognised.

The valley called Pierre's Hole, is about thirty miles in length, and fifteen in width, bounded to the west and south by low and broken ridges, and overlooked to the east by three lofty mountains, called the three Tetons, which domineer as landmarks over a vast extent of country.

A fine stream, fed by rivulets and mountain springs, pours through the valley towards the north, dividing it into nearly equal parts. The meadows on its borders are broad and extensive, covered with willow and cotton-wood

trees, so closely interlocked and matted together, as to be nearly impassable.

In this valley was congregated the motley populace connected with the fur trade. Here the two rival companies had their encampments, with their retainers of all kinds: traders, trappers, hunters, and half-breeds, assembled from all quarters, awaiting their yearly supplies, and their orders to start off in new directions. Here, also, the savage tribes connected with the trade, the Nez Percés or Chopunnish Indians, and Flatheads, had pitched their lodges beside the streams, and with their squaws, awaited the distribution of goods and finery. There was, moreover, a band of fifteen free trappers, commanded by a gallant leader from Arkansas, named Sinclair, who held their encampment a little apart from the rest.

Such was the wild and heterogeneous assemblage, amounting to several hundred men, civilized and savage, distributed in tents and lodges in the several camps.

The arrival of Captain Sublette with supplies, put the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in full activity. The wares and merchandise were quickly opened, and as quickly disposed of to trappers and Indians; the usual excitement and revelry took place, after which, all hands began to disperse to their several destinations.

On the 17th of July, a small brigade of fourteen trappers, led by Milton Sublette, brother of the captain, set out with the intention of proceeding to the south-west. They were accompanied by Sinclair and his fifteen free trappers; Captain Wyeth, also, and his New-England band of beaver hunters and salmon fishers, now dwindled down to eleven, took this opportunity to prosecute their cruise in the wilderness, in company with such experienced pilots.

On the first day, they proceeded about eight miles to the south-east, and encamped for the night, still in the valley of Pierre's Hole. On the following morning, just as they were raising

their camp, they observed a long line of people pouring down a defile of the mountains. They at first supposed them to be Fontenelle and his party, whose arrival had been daily expected. Captain Wyeth, however, reconnoitred them with a spyglass, and soon perceived they were Indians. They were divided into two parties, forming, in the whole, about one hundred and fifty persons, men, women, and children. Some were on horseback, fantastically painted and arrayed, with scarlet blankets fluttering in the wind. The greater part, however, were on foot. They had perceived the trappers before they were themselves discovered, and came down yelling and whooping into the plain. On nearer approach, they were ascertained to be Blackfeet.

One of the trappers of Sublette's brigade, a half-breed, named Antoine Godin, now mounted his horse, and rode forth as if to hold a conference. He was the son of an Iroquois hunter, who had been cruelly murdered by the Black-

feet, at a small stream below the mountains, which still bears his name. In company with Antoine rode forth a Flathead Indian, whose once powerful tribe had been completely broken down in their wars with the Blackfeet. Both of them, therefore, cherished the most vengeful hostility against these marauders of the mountains. The Blackfeet came to a halt. One of the chiefs advanced singly and unarmed, bearing the pipe of peace. This overture was certainly pacific; but Antoine and the Flathead were predisposed to hostility, and pretended to consider it a treacherous movement.

"Is your piece charged?" said Antoine to his red companion.

"It is."

"Then cock it, and follow me."

They met the Blackfoot chief half way, who extended his hand in friendship. Antoine grasped it.

"Fire!" cried he.

The Flathead levelled his piece, and brought the Blackfoot to the ground. Antoine snatched off his scarlet blanket, which was richly ornamented, and galloped off with it as a trophy to the camp, the bullets of the enemy whistling after him.

The Indians immediately threw themselves into the edge of a swamp, among willows and cotton-wood trees, interwoven with vines. Here they began to fortify themselves; the women digging a trench, and throwing up a breastwork of logs and branches, deep hid in the bosom of the wood, while the warriors skirmished at the edge to keep the trappers at bay.

The latter took their station in a ravine in front, from whence they kept up a scattering fire. As to Captain Wyeth, and his little band of "down-easters," they were perfectly astounded by this second specimen of life in the wilderness; the men being, especially, unused to bush-fighting and the use of the rifle, were at a loss how to proceed. Captain Wyeth,

however, acted as a skilful commander. He got all his horses into camp and secured them; then, making a breastwork of his packs of goods, he charged his men to remain in garrison, and not to stir out of their fort. For himself, he mingled with the other leaders, determined to take his share in the conflict.

In the meantime, an express had been sent off to the rendezvous for reinforcements. Captain Sublette, and his associate, Campbell, were at their camp when the express came galloping across the plain, waving his cap, and giving the alarm; "Blackfeet! Blackfeet! a fight in the upper part of the valley!—to arms! to arms!"

The alarm was passed from camp to camp. It was a common cause. Every one turned out with horse and rifle. The Nez Percés and Flatheads joined. As fast as horseman could arm and mount he galloped off; the valley was soon alive with white men and red men scouring at full speed.

Sublette ordered his men to keep to the

camp, being recruits from St. Louis, unused to Indian warfare. He and his friend Campbell prepared for action. Throwing off their coats, rolling up their sleeves, and arming themselves with pistols and rifles, they mounted their horses and dashed forward among the first. As they rode along, they made their wills in soldierlike style; each stating how his effects should be disposed of in case of his death, and appointing the other his executor.

The Blackfeet warriors had supposed the brigade of Milton Sublette all the foe they had to deal with, and were astonished to behold the whole valley suddenly swarming with horsemen, galloping to the field of action. They withdrew into their fort, which was completely hid from sight in the dark and tangled wood. Most of their women and children had retreated to the mountains. The trappers now sallied forth and approached the swamp, firing into the thickets at random; the Blackfeet had a better

sight at their adversaries, who were in the open field, and a half-breed was wounded in the shoulder.

When Captain Sublette arrived, he urged to penetrate the swamp and storm the fort, but all hung back in awe of the dismal horrors of the place, and the danger of attacking such desperadoes in their savage den. The very Indian allies, though accustomed to bush-fighting, regarded it as almost impenetrable, and full of frightful danger. Sublette was not to be turned from his purpose, but offered to lead the way into the swamp. Campbell stepped forward to accompany him.

Before entering the perilous wood, Sublette took his brothers aside, and told them that in case he fell, Campbell, who knew his will, was to be his executor. This done, he grasped his rifle and pushed into the thickets, followed by Campbell. Sinclair, the partisan from Arkansas, was at the edge of the wood with his

brother and a few of his men. Excited by the gallant example of the two friends, he pressed forward to share their dangers.

The swamp was produced by the labours of the beaver, which, by damming up a stream, had inundated a portion of the valley. The place was all overgrown with woods and thickets, so closely matted and entangled, that it was impossible to see ten paces ahead, and the three associates in peril had to crawl along, one after another, making their way by putting the branches and vines aside; but doing it with caution, lest they should attract the eye of some lurking marksman. They took the lead by turns, each advancing about twenty yards at a time, and now and then hallooing to their men to follow. Some of the latter gradually entered the swamp, and followed a little distance in their rear.

They had now reached a more open part of the wood, and had glimpses of the rude fortress from between the trees. It was a mere breast-

work, as we have said, of logs and branches, with blankets, buffalo robes, and the leathern covers of lodges, extended round the top as a screen. The movements of the leaders, as they groped their way, had been descried by the sharp-sighted enemy. As Sinclair, who was in the advance, was putting some branches aside, he was shot through the body. He fell on the spot. "Take me to my brother," said he to Campbell. The latter gave him in charge to some of the men, who conveyed him out of the swamp.

Sublette now took the advance. As he was reconnoitring the fort, he perceived an Indian peeping through an aperture. In an instant his rifle was levelled and discharged, and the ball struck the savage in the eye.

While he was reloading, he called to Campbell, and pointed out to him the hole; "Watch that place," said he, "and you will soon have a fair chance for a shot."

Scarce had he uttered the words, when a ball

struck him in the shoulder, and almost wheeled him round. His first thought was to take hold of his arm with his other hand, and move it up and down. He ascertained to his satisfaction, that the bone was not broken. The next moment he was so faint that he could not stand. Campbell took him in his arms and carried him out of the thicket. The same shot that struck Sublette, wounded another man in the head.

A brisk fire was now opened by the mountaineers from the wood, answered occasionally from the fort. Unluckily, the trappers and their allies, in searching for the fort, had got scattered, so that Captain Wyeth, and a number of Nez Percés, approached the fort on the north-west side, while others did the same on the opposite quarter. A cross fire thus took place, which occasionally did mischief to friends as well as foes. An Indian was shot down, close to Captain Wyeth, by a ball which, he was convinced, had been sped from the rifle of a trapper on the other side of the fort.

The number of whites and their Indian allies, had by this time so much increased by arrivals from the rendezvous, that the Blackfeet were completely overmatched. They kept doggedly in their fort, however, making no offer of surrender.

An occasional firing into the breastwork was kept up during the day. Now and then, one of the Indian allies, in bravado, would rush up to the fort, fire over the ramparts, tear off a buffalo robe or a scarlet blanket, and return with it in triumph to his comrades. Most of the savage garrison that fell, however, were killed in the first part of the attack.

At one time it was resolved to set fire to the fort; and the squaws belonging to the allies, were employed to collect combustibles. This, however, was abandoned; the Nez Percés being unwilling to destroy the robes and blankets, and other spoils of the enemy, which they felt sure would fall into their hands.

The Indians, when fighting, are prone to

taunt and revile each other. During one of the pauses of the battle, the voice of the Blackfeet chief was heard.

"So long," said he, "as we had powder and ball, we fought you in the open field: when those were spent, we retreated here to die with our women and children. You may burn us in our fort; but, stay by our ashes, and you who are so hungry for fighting, will soon have enough. There are four hundred lodges of our brethren at hand. They will soon be here—their arms are strong—their hearts are big—they will avenge us!"

This speech was translated two or three times by Nez Percé and creole interpreters. By the time it was rendered into English, the chief was made to say, that four hundred lodges of his tribe were attacking the encampment at the other end of the valley. Every one now was for hurrying to the defence of the rendezvous. A party was left to keep watch upon the fort; the rest galloped off to the camp.

As night came on, the trappers drew out of the swamp, and remained about the skirts of the wood. By morning, their companions returned from the rendezvous, with the report that all was safe. As the day opened, they ventured within the swamp and approached the fort. All was silent. They advanced up to it without opposition. They entered: it had been abandoned in the night, and the Blackfeet had effected their retreat, carrying off their wounded on litters made of branches, leaving bloody traces on the herbage.

The bodies of ten Indians were found within the fort; among them the one shot in the eye by Sublette. The Blackfeet afterwards reported that they had lost twenty-six warriors in this battle. Thirty-two horses were likewise found killed; among them were some of those recently carried off from Sublette's party, in the night; which showed that these were the very savages that had attacked him.

They proved to be an advance party of the

main body of Blackfeet; which had been upon the trail of Sublette's party. Five white men and one half-breed were killed, and several wounded. Seven of the Nez Percés were also killed, and six wounded. They had an old chief, who was reputed as invulnerable. In the course of the action he was hit by a spent ball, and threw up blood; but his skin was unbroken. His people were now fully convinced that he was proof against powder and ball.

A striking circumstance is related as having occurred, the morning after the battle. As some of the trappers and their Indian allies were approaching the fort, through the woods, they beheld an Indian woman, of noble form and features, leaning against a tree. Their surprise at her lingering here alone, to fall into the hands of her enemies, was dispelled, when they saw the corpse of a warrior at her feet. Either she was so lost in grief, as not to perceive their approach; or a proud spirit kept her silent and motionless. The Indians set up a

yell, on discovering her, and before the trappers could interfere, her mangled body fell upon the corpse which she had refused to abandon.

We have heard this anecdote discredited by one of the leaders who had been in the battle: but the fact may have taken place without his seeing it, and been concealed from him. It is an instance of female devotion, even to the death, which we are well disposed to believe and to record.

After the battle, the brigade of Milton Sublette, together with the free trappers, and Captain Wyeth's New-England band, remained some days at the rendezvous, to see if the main body of Blackfeet intended to make an attack; nothing of the kind occurring, they once more put themselves in motion, and proceeded on their route towards the south-west.

Captain Sublette having distributed his supplies, had intended to set off on his return to St. Louis, taking with him the peltries collected from the trappers and Indians. His wound,

however, obliged him to postpone his departure.

Several who were to have accompanied him, became impatient of this delay. Among these was a young Bostonian, Mr. Joseph More, one of the followers of Captain Wyeth, who had seen enough of mountain life and savage warfare, and was eager to return to the abodes of civilization. He and six others, among whom were a Mr. Foy, of Mississipi, Mr. Alfred K. Stephens, of St. Louis, and two grandsons of the celebrated Daniel Boon, set out together, in advance of Sublette's party, thinking they would make their own way through the mountains.

It was just five days after the battle of the swamp, that these seven companions were making their way through Jackson's Hole, a valley not far from the three Tetons, when, as they were descending a hill, a party of Blackfeet that lay in ambush, started up with terrific yells. The horse of the young Bostonian,

who was in front, wheeled round with affright, and threw his unskilful rider. The young man scrambled up the side of the hill, but, unaccustomed to such wild scenes, lost his presence of mind, and stood, as if paralyzed, on the edge of a bank, until the Blackfeet came up, and slew him on the spot. His comrades had fled on the first alarm: but two of them, Foy and Stephens, seeing his danger, paused when they had got half way up the hill, turned back, dismounted, and hastened to his assistance. Foy was instantly killed. Stephens was severely wounded, but escaped, to die five days afterwards.

The survivors returned to the camp of Captain Sublette, bringing tidings of this new disaster. That hardy leader, as soon as he could bear the journey, set out on his return to St. Louis, accompanied by Campbell. As they had a number of pack horses richly laden with peltries to convey, they chose a different route through the mountains, out of the way,

as they hoped, of the lurking bands of Blackfeet.

They succeeded in making the frontier in safety. We remember to have seen them with their band, about two or three months afterwards, passing through a skirt of woodland in the upper part of Missouri. Their long caravan stretched in single file for nearly half a mile. Sublette still wore his arm in a sling. The mountaineers in their rude hunting dresses, armed with rifles, and roughly mounted, and leading their pack horses down a hill of the forest, looked like banditti returning with plunder. On the top of some of the packs were perched several half-breed children, perfect little imps, with wild black eyes glaring from among elf locks. These, I was told, were children of the trappers: pledges of love from their squaw spouses in the wilderness.

CHAPTER VII.

RETREAT OF THE BLACKFEET—FONTENELLE'S CAMP IN DANGER—CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE AND THE BLACKFEET—FREE TRAPPERS—THEIR CHARACTER, HABITS, DRESS, EQUIPMENTS, HORSES—GAME FELLOWS OF THE MOUNTAINS—THEIR VISIT TO THE CAMP—GOOD FELLOWSHIP AND GOOD CHEER—A CAROUSE—A SWAGGER, A BRAWL, AND A RECONCILIATION.

The Blackfeet warriors, when they effected their midnight retreat from their wild fastness in Pierre's Hole, fell back into the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee, or Green river, where they joind the main body of their band. The whole force amounted to several hundred fighting men, gloomy and exasperated by their late disaster. They had with them their wives and

children, which incapacitated them for any bold and extensive enterprise of a warlike nature; but when, in the course of their wanderings, they came in sight of Fontenelle's encampment, who had moved some distance up Green river valley, in search of the free trappers, they put up tremendous war-cries and advanced fiercely, as if to attack it. Second thoughts caused them to moderate their fury. They recollected the severe lesson they had just received, and they could not but remark the strength of Fontenelle's position, who had pitched his camp with great judgment.

A formal talk ensued. The Blackfeet said nothing of the late battle, of which Fontenelle had as yet received no accounts; the latter, however, knew the hostile and perfidious nature of these savages, and took care to inform them of the encampment of Captain Bonneville, that they might know there were more white men in the neighbourhood.

The conference ended, Fontenelle sent a

Delaware Indian of his party to conduct fifteen of the Blackfeet to the camp of Captain Bonneville. There was at that time two Crow Indians in the captain's camp, who had recently arrived there. They looked with dismay at this deputation from their implacable enemies, and gave the captain a terrible character of them, assuring him that the best thing he could possibly do, was to put those Blackfeet deputies to death on the spot.

The captain, however, who had heard nothing of the conflict at Pierre's Hole, declined all compliance with this sage counsel. He treated the grim warriors with his usual urbanity. They passed some little time at the camp; saw, no doubt, that every thing was conducted with military skill and vigilance; and that such an enemy was not to be easily surprised, nor to be molested with impunity, and then departed, to report all that they had seen to their comrades.

The two scouts which Captain Bonneville

had sent out to seek for the band of free trappers, expected by Fontenèlle, and to invite them to his camp, had been successful in their search, and on the 12th of August, those worthies made their appearance.

To explain the meaning of the appellation, free trapper, it is necessary to state the terms on which the men enlist in the service of the fur companies. Some have regular wages, and are furnished with weapons, horses, traps, and other requisites. These are under command, and bound to do every duty required of them connected with the service; such as hunting, trapping, loading and unloading the horses, mounting guard; and, in short, all the drudgery of the camp. These are the hired trappers.

The free trappers are a more independent class; and, in describing them, we shall do little more than transcribe the graphic description of them by Captain Bonneville.

"They come and go," says he, "when and

where they please; provide their own horses, arms, and other equipments; trap and trade on their own account, and dispose of their skins and peltries to the highest bidder. Sometimes in a dangerous hunting ground, they attach themselves to the camp of some trader for protection. Here they come under some restrictions; they have to conform to the ordinary rules for trapping, and to submit to such restraints, and to take part in such general duties, as are established for the good order and safety of the camp. In return for this protection, and for their camp keeping, they are bound to dispose of all the beaver they take, to the trader who commands the camp, at a certain rate per skin; or, should they prefer seeking a market elsewhere, they are to make him an allowance, of from thirty to forty dollars for the whole hunt."

There is an inferior order, who, either from prudence or poverty, come to these dangerous hunting grounds without horses or accoutre-

ments, and are furnished by the traders. These, like the hired trappers, are bound to exert themselves to the utmost in taking beavers, which, without skinning, they render in at the trader's lodge, where a stipulated price for each is placed to their credit. These, though generally included in the generic name of free trappers, have the more specific title of skin trappers.

The wandering whites who mingle for any length of time with the savages, have invariably a proneness to adopt savage habitudes; but none more so than the free trappers. It is a matter of vanity and ambition with them to discard every thing that may bear the stamp of civilized life, and to adopt the manners, habits, dress, gesture, and even walk of the Indian.

You cannot pay a free trapper a greater compliment, than to persuade him you have mistaken him for an Indian brave; and, in truth, the counterfeit is complete. His hair, suffered to attain to a great length, is carefully combed out,

and either left to fall carelessly over his shoulders, or plaited neatly and tied up in otter skins, or parti-coloured ribands. A hunting shirt of ruffled calico of bright dyes, or of ornamented leather, falls to his knee; below which, curiously fashioned leggins, ornamented with strings, fringes, and a profusion of hawks' bells, reach to a costly pair of moccasins of the finest Indian fabric, richly embroidered with beads. A blanket of scarlet, or some other bright colour, hangs from his shoulders, and is girt round his waist with a red sash, in which he bestows his pistols, knife, and the stem of his Indian pipe; preparations either for peace or war. His gun is lavishly decorated with brass tacks and vermilion, and provided with a fringed cover, occasionally of buckskin, ornamented here and there with a feather. His horse, the noble minister to the pride, pleasure, and profit of the mountaineer, is selected for his speed and spirit, and prancing carriage, and holds a place in his estimation second only to himself.

He shares largely of his bounty, and of his pride and pomp of trapping. He is caparisoned in the most dashing and fantastic style; the bridles and crupper are weightily embossed with beads and cockades; and head, mane, and tail, are interwoven with abundance of eagles' plumes, which flutter in the wind. To complete this grotesque equipment, the proud animal is bestreaked and bespotted with vermilion, or with white clay, whichever presents the most glaring contrast to his real colour.

Such is the account given by Captain Bonneville of these rangers of the wilderness, and their appearance at the camp was strikingly characteristic. They came dashing forward at full speed, firing their fusees, and yelling in Indian style. Their dark sunburnt faces, and long flowing hair, their leggins, flaps, moccasins, and gaudily dyed blankets, and their painted horses richly caparisoned, gave them so much the air and appearance of Indians, that it was difficult to persuade oneself that they were

white men, and had been brought up in civilized life.

Captain Bonneville was delighted with the game look of these cavaliers of the mountains, welcomed them heartily to his camp, and ordered a free allowance of grog to regale them, which soon put them in the most braggart spirits. They pronounced the captain the finest fellow in the world, and his men all *bons garçons,* jovial lads, and swore they would pass the day with them. They did so, and a day it was, of boast, and swagger, and rodomontado. The prime bullies and braves among the free trappers had each his circle of novices, from among the captain's band; mere greenhorns, men unused to Indian life; *mangeurs de lard,* or pork eaters; as such new comers are superciliously called by the veterans of the wilderness. These he would astonish and delight by the hour, with prodigious tales of his doings among the Indians; and of the wonders he had seen, and the wonders he had performed,

in his adventurous peregrinations among the mountains.

In the evening, the free trappers drew off, and returned to the camp of Fontenelle, highly delighted with their visit and with their new acquaintances, and promising to return the following day. They kept their word: day after day their visits were repeated; they became "hail fellow well met" with Captain Bonneville's men; treat after treat succeeded, until both parties got most potently convinced, or rather confounded by liquor.

Now came on confusion and uproar. The free trappers were no longer suffered to have all the swagger to themselves. The camp bullies and prime trappers of the party began to ruffle up, and to brag, in turn, of their perils and achievements. Each now tried to outboast and out-talk each other; a quarrel ensued as a matter of course, and a general fight, according to frontier usage. The two factions

drew out their forces for a pitched battle. They fell to work and belaboured each other with might and main; kicks and cuffs and dry blows were as well bestowed as they were well merited, until, having fought to their hearts' content, and been drubbed into a familiar acquaintance with each other's prowess and good qualities, they ended the fight by becoming firmer friends than they could have been rendered by a year's peaceable companionship.

While Captain Bonneville amused himself by observing the habits and characteristics of this singular class of men; and indulged them, for the time, in all their vagaries, he profited by the opportunity to collect from them information concerning the different parts of the country about which they had been accustomed to range; the characters of the tribes, and, in short, every thing important to his enterprise. He also succeeded in securing the

services of several to guide and aid him in his peregrinations among the mountains, and to trap for him during the ensuing season.

Having strengthened his party with such valuable recruits, he felt in some measure consoled for the loss of the Delaware Indians, decoyed from him by Mr. Fontenelle.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLANS FOR THE WINTER—SALMON RIVER—ABUNDANCE OF SALMON WEST OF THE MOUNTAINS — NEW ARRANGEMENTS — CACHES— CERRE'S DETACHMENT—MOVEMENTS IN FONTENELLE'S CAMP— DEPARTURE OF THE BLACKFEET—THEIR FORTUNES—WIND MOUNTAIN STREAMS — BUCKEYE, THE DELAWARE HUNTER, AND THE GRIZZLY BEAR — BONES OF MURDERED TRAVELLERS — VISIT TO PIERRE'S HOLE—TRACES OF THE BATTLE—NEZ PERCE INDIANS— ARRIVAL AT SALMON RIVER.

The information derived from the free trappers, determined Captain Bonneville as to his further movements. He learnt that in the Green river valley the winters were severe, the snow frequently falling to the depth of several feet; and that there was no good wintering ground in the neighbourhood. The upper part of the Salmon river was represented as far more

eligible, beside being in an excellent beaver country; and thither the captain resolved to bend his course.

The Salmon river is one of the upper branches of the Oregon or Columbia; and takes its rise from various sources, among a group of mountains to the north-west of the Wind river chain. It takes its name from the immense shoals of salmon which ascend it in the months of September and October. The salmon on the west side of the Rocky mountains are, like the buffalo on the eastern plains, vast migratory supplies for the wants of man, that come and go with the seasons. As the buffalo in countless throngs find their certain way with the transient pasturage on the prairies, along the fresh banks of the rivers, and up every valley and green defile of the mountains, so the salmon at their allotted seasons, regulated by a sublime and all-seeing Providence, swarm in myriads up the great rivers, and find their way

up their main branches, and into the minutest tributary streams; so as to pervade the great arid plains, and to penetrate even among barren mountains. Thus wandering tribes are fed in the desert places of the wilderness, where there is no herbage for the animals of the chase, and where, but for these periodical supplies, it would be impossible for man to subsist.

The rapid currents of the rivers that run into the Pacific, render the ascent of them very exhausting to the salmon. When the fish first run up the rivers, they are fat and in fine order. The struggle against impetuous streams and frequent rapids, gradually renders them thin and weak, and great numbers are seen floating down the rivers on their backs. As the season advances and the water becomes chilled, they are flung in myriads on the shores, where the wolves and bears assemble to banquet on them. Often they rot in such quantities along

the river banks, as to taint the atmosphere. They are commonly from two to three feet long.

Captain Bonneville now made his arrangements for the autumn and the winter. The nature of the country through which he was about to travel, rendered it impossible to proceed with waggons. He had more goods and supplies of various kinds, also, than were required for present purposes, or than could be conveniently transported on horseback; aided, therefore, by a few confidential men, he made *cachés*, or secret pits, during the night, when all the rest of the camp were asleep, and in these deposited the superfluous effects, together with the waggons. All traces of the cachés were then carefully obliterated. This is a common expedient with the traders and trappers of the mountains. Having no established posts and magazines, they make these cachés or deposits at certain points, whither they repair, occasionally,

for supplies. It is an expedient derived from the wandering tribes of Indians.

Many of the horses were still so weak and lame as to be unfit for a long scramble through the mountains. These were collected into one cavalcade, and given in charge to an experienced trapper, of the name of Matthieu. He was to proceed westward, with a brigade of trappers, to Bear river; a stream to the west of the Green river or Colorado, where there was good pasturage for the horses. In this neighbourhood it was expected he would meet the Shoshonie village or bands,* on their yearly migrations, with whom he was to trade for peltries and provisions. After he had traded with these people, finished his trapping, and recruited the strength of the horses, he was to proceed to Salmon ri-

* A *village* of Indians, in trappers' language, does not always imply a fixed community; but often a wandering horde or band. The Shoshonies, like most of the mountain tribes, have no settled residences; but are a nomadic people, dwelling in tents or lodges, and shifting their encampments from place to place, according as fish and game abound.

ver and rejoin Captain Bonneville, who intended to fix his quarters there for the winter.

While these arrangements were in progress in the camp of Captain Bonneville, there was a sudden bustle and stir in the camp of Fontenelle. One of the partners of the American Fur Company had arrived, in all haste, from the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole, in quest of the supplies. The competition between the two rival companies was just now at its height, and prosecuted with unusual zeal. The tramontane concerns of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were managed by two resident partners, Fitzpatrick and Bridger; those of the American Fur Company, by Vanderburgh and Dripps. The latter were ignorant of the mountain regions, but trusted to make up by vigilance and activity for their want of knowledge of the country.

Fitzpatrick, an experienced trader and trapper, knew the evils of competition in the same

hunting-grounds, and had proposed that the two companies should divide the country, so as to hunt in different directions: this proposition being rejected, he had exerted himself to get first into the field. His exertions, as has already been shown, were effectual.

The early arrival of Sublette, with supplies, had enabled the various brigades of the Rocky Mountain Company to start off to their respective hunting-grounds. Fitzpatrick himself, with his associate, Bridger, had pushed off with a strong party of trappers, for a prime beaver country to the north-west.

This had put Vanderburgh upon his mettle. He had hastened on to meet Fontenelle. Finding him at his camp in Green river valley, he immediately furnished himself with the supplies; put himself at the head of the free trappers and Delawares, and set off with all speed, determined to follow hard upon the heels of Fitzpatrick and Bridger.

Of the adventures of these parties among the mountains, and the disastrous effects of their competition, we shall have occasion to treat in a future chapter.

Fontenelle, having now delivered his supplies and accomplished his errand, struck his tents and set off on his return to the Yellowstone. Captain Bonneville and his band, therefore, remained alone in the Green river valley; and their situation might have been perilous, had the Blackfeet band still lingered in the vicinity. Those marauders, however, had been dismayed at finding so many resolute and well-appointed parties of white men in this neighbourhood. They had, therefore, abandoned this part of the country, passing over the head waters of the Green river, and bending their course toward the Yellowstone.

Misfortune pursued them. Their route lay through the country of their deadly enemies, the Crows. In the Wind river valley, which

lies east of the mountains, they were encountered by a powerful war party of that tribe, and completely put to rout. Forty of them were killed, many of their women and children captured, and the scattered fugitives hunted like wild beasts, until they were completely chased out of the Crow country.

On the 22d of August Captain Bonneville broke up his camp, and set out on his route for Salmon river. His baggage was arranged in packs, three to a mule, or packhorse; one being disposed on each side of the animal, and one on the top; the three forming a load of from one hundred and eighty to two hundred and twenty pounds. This is the trappers' style of loading their packhorses; his men, however, were inexpert at adjusting the packs, which were prone to get loose and slip of; so that it was necessary to keep a rear guard, to assist in reloading. A few days' experience, however, brought them into proper training.

Their march lay up the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee, overlooked to the right by the lofty peaks of the Wind river mountains. From bright little lakes and fountain heads of this remarkable bed of mountains, poured forth the tributary streams of the Seeds-ke-dee. Some came rushing down gullies and ravines; others tumbling in crystal cascades from inaccessible clefts and rocks, winding their way in rapid and pellucid currents across the valley, to throw themselves into the main river. So transparent were these waters, that the trout, with which they abounded, could be seen gliding about as if in the air; and their pebbly beds were distinctly visible at the depth of many feet. This beautiful and diaphanous quality of the Rocky mountain streams, prevails for a long time after they have mingled their waters, and swollen into important rivers.

Issuing forth from the upper part of the valley, Captain Bonneville continued to the

east-north-east, across rough and lofty ridges, and deep rocky defiles, extremely fatiguing both to man and horse.

Among his hunters was a Delaware Indian who had remained faithful to him. His name was Buckeye. He had often prided himself on his skill and success in coping with the grizzly bear, that terror of the hunters. Though crippled in the left arm, he declared he had no hesitation to close with a wounded bear, and attack him with a sword. If armed with a rifle, he was willing to brave the animal when in full force and fury. He had twice an opportunity of proving his prowess, in the course of this mountain-journey, and was each time successful. His mode was to seat himself upon the ground, with his rifle cocked and resting on his lame arm. Thus prepared, he would await the approach of the bear with perfect coolness, nor pull trigger until he was close at hand. In each instance, he laid the monster dead upon the spot.

A march of three or four days, through savage and lonely scenes, brought Captain Bonneville to the fatal defile of Jackson's Hole, where poor More and Foy had been surprised and murdered by the Blackfeet. The feelings of the Captain were shocked at beholding the bones of these unfortunate young men bleaching among the rocks; and he caused them to be decently interred.

On the 3d of September he arrived on the summit of a mountain which commanded a full view of the eventful valley of Pierre's Hole. From hence he could trace the winding of its streams through green meadows, and forests of willow and cotton-wood; and had a prospect, between distant mountains, of the lava plains of Snake river, dimly spread forth like a sleeping ocean below.

After enjoying this magnificent prospect, he descended into the valley, and visited the scenes of the late desperate conflict. There

were the remains of the rude fortress in the swamp, shattered by rifle shot, and strewed with the mingled bones of savages and horses. There was the late populous and noisy rendezvous, with the traces of trappers' camps and Indian lodges; but their fires were extinguished, the motley assemblage of trappers and hunters, white traders and Indian braves, had all dispersed to different points of the wilderness, and the valley had relapsed into its pristine solitude and silence.

That night the captain encamped upon the battle-ground; the next day, he resumed his toilsome peregrinations through the mountains. For upwards of two weeks he continued his painful march; both men and horses suffering excessively at times from hunger and thirst. At length, on the 19th of September, he reached the upper waters of Salmon river.

The weather was cold, and there were symptoms of an impending storm. The night set

in, but Buckeye, the Delaware Indian, was missing. He had left the party early in the morning, to hunt by himself, according to his custom. Fears were entertained, lest he should lose his way, and become bewildered in tempestuous weather. These fears increased on the following morning, when a violent snow-storm came on, which soon covered the earth to the depth of several inches.

Captain Bonneville immediately encamped, and sent out scouts in every direction. After some search, Buckeye was discovered, quietly seated, at a considerable distance in the rear, waiting the expected approach of the party, not knowing that they had passed, the snow having covered their trail.

On the ensuing morning, they resumed their march at an early hour, but had not proceeded far, when the hunters, who were beating up the country in the advance, came galloping back, making signals to encamp, and crying "Indians! Indians!"

Captain Bonneville immediately struck into a skirt of wood and prepared for action. The savages were now seen trooping over the hills in great numbers. One of them left the main body and came forward singly, making signals of peace. He announced them as a band of Nez Percés* or Pierced-nose Indians, friendly to the whites, whereupon an invitation was returned by Captain Bonneville, for them to come and encamp with him.

They halted for a short time to make their toilette, an operation as important with an Indian warrior, as with a fashionable beauty. This done, they arranged themselves in martial style, the chiefs leading the van, the braves following in a long line, painted and decorated, and topped off with fluttering plumes. In this way they advanced, shouting and singing, firing

* We should observe that this tribe is universally called by its French name, which is pronounced by the trappers, *Nepercy*. There are two main branches of this tribe, the upper Nepercys and the lower Nepercys, as we shall show hereafter.

off their fusees, and clashing their shields. The two parties encamped hard by each other. The Nez Percés were on a hunting expedition, but had been almost famished on their march. They had no provisions left but a few dried salmon, yet finding the white men equally in want, they generously offered to share even this meager pittance, and frequently repeated the offer, with an earnestness that left no doubt of their sincerity.

Their generosity won the heart of Captain Bonneville, and produced the most cordial good will on the part of his men. For two days that the parties remained in company, the most amicable intercourse prevailed, and they parted the best of friends. Captain Bonneville detached a few men, under Mr. Cerré, an able leader, to accompany the Nez Percés on their hunting expedition, and to trade with them for meat for the winter's supply. After this, he proceeded down the river, about five

miles below the forks, when he came to a halt on the 26th of September, to establish his winter quarters.

CHAPTER IX.

HORSES TURNED LOOSE—PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER QUARTERS—HUNGRY TIMES—NEZ PERCES, THEIR HONESTY, PIETY, PACIFIC HABITS, RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES—CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE'S CONVERSATION WITH THEM—THEIR LOVE OF GAMBLING.

It was a gratifying thing to Captain Bonneville, after so long and toilsome a course of travel, to relieve his poor jaded horses of the burdens under which they were almost ready to give out, and to behold them rolling upon the green grass, and taking a long repose after all their sufferings. Indeed, so exhausted were

they, that those employed under the saddle were no longer capable of hunting for the daily subsistence of the camp.

All hands now set to work to prepare a winter cantonment. A temporary fortification was thrown up for the protection of the party; a secure and comfortable pen, into which the horses could be driven at night; and huts were built for the reception of the merchandise.

This done, Captain Bonneville made a distribution of his forces: twenty men were to remain with him in garrison to protect the property; the rest were organized into three brigades, and sent off in different directions, to subsist themselves by hunting the buffalo, until the snow should become too deep.

Indeed, it would have been impossible to provide for the whole party in this neighbourhood. It was at the extreme western limit of the buffalo range, and these animals had recently been completely hunted out of the neighbourhood by the Nez Percés, so that, although

the hunters of the garrison were continually on the alert, ranging the country round, they brought in scarce game sufficient to keep famine from the door. Now and then there was a scanty meal of fish or wild fowl, occasionally an antelope; but frequently the cravings of hunger had to be appeased with roots, or the flesh of wolves and muskrats. Rarely could the inmates of the cantonment boast of having made a full meal, and never of having wherewithal for the morrow.

In this way they starved along until the 8th of October, when they were joined by a party of five families of Nez Percés, who in some measure reconciled them to the hardships of their situation, by exhibiting a lot still more destitute. A more forlorn set they had never encountered: they had not a morsel of meat or fish; nor any thing to subsist on, excepting roots, wild rosebuds, the barks of certain plants, and other vegetable productions; neither had they any weapon for hunting or defence, ex-

cepting an old spear: yet the poor fellows made no murmur nor complaint; but seemed accustomed to their had fare. If they could not teach the white men their practical stoicism, they at least made them acquainted with the edible properties of roots and wild rosebuds, and furnished them a supply from their own store.

The necessities of the camp at length became so urgent, that Captain Bonneville determined to despatch a party to the Horse prairie, a plain to the north of his cantonment, to procure a supply of provisions. When the men were about to depart, he proposed to the Nez Percés that they, or some of them, should join the hunting party. To his surprise, they promptly declined. He inquired the reason for their refusal, seeing that they were in nearly as starving a situation as his own people. They replied that it was a sacred day with them, and the Great Spirit would be angry should they devote it to hunting. They offered, however, to accompany

the party if it would delay its departure until the following day; but this the pinching demands of hunger would not permit, and the detachment proceeded.

A few days afterwards, four of them signified to Captain Bonneville that they were about to hunt.

"What!" exclaimed he, "without guns or arrows; and with only one old spear? What do you expect to kill?"

They smiled among themselves, but made no answer. They prepared for the chase with a natural piety that seems to have been edyfying to the beholders. They performed some religious rites, and offered up to the Great Spirit a few short prayers for safety and success; then, having received the blessings of their wives, they leaped upon their horses and departed, leaving the whole party of Christian spectators amazed and rebuked by this lesson of faith and dependance on a supreme and benevolent Being.

"Accustomed," adds Captain Bonneville, "as I had heretofore been, to find the wretched Indian revelling in blood, and stained by every vice which can degrade human nature, I could scarcely realize the scene which I had witnessed. Wonder at such unaffected tenderness and piety, where it was least to have been sought, contended in all our bosoms with shame and confusion, at receiving such pure and wholesome instructions from creatures so far below us in all the arts and comforts of life."

The simple prayers of the poor Indians were not unheard. In the course of four or five days they returned, laden with meat. Captain Bonneville was curious to know how they had attained such success with such scanty means. They gave him to understand that they had chased the herds of buffalo at full speed, until they tired them down, when they easily despatched them with the spear, and made use of the same weapon to flay the carcasses. To carry through their lesson to their Christian

friends, the poor savages were as charitable as they had been pious, and generously shared with them the spoils of their hunting: giving them food enough to last for several days.

A further and more intimate intercourse with this tribe, gave Captain Bonneville still greater cause to admire their strong devotional feeling.

"Simply to call these people religious," says he, "would convey but a faint idea of the deep hue of piety and devotion which pervades their whole conduct. Their honesty is immaculate, and their purity of purpose, and their observance of the rites of their religion, are most uniform and remarkable. They are, certainly, more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages."

In fact, the antibelligerent policy of this tribe, may have sprung from the doctrines of Christian charity, for it would appear that they had imbibed some notions of the Christian faith from Catholic missionaries and traders who had been among them. They even had a rude

calendar of the fasts and festivals of the Romish church, and some traces of its ceremonials. These have become blended with their own wild rites, and present a strange medley; civilized and barbarous. On the Sabbath, men, women and children array themselves in their best style, and assemble round a pole erected at the head of the camp. Here they go through a wild fantastic ceremonial; strongly resembling the religious dance of the Shaking Quakers; but from its enthusiasm, much more striking and impressive. During the intervals of the ceremony, the principal chiefs who officiate as priests, instruct them in their duties, and exhort them to virtue and good deeds.

"There is something antique and patriarchal," observes Captain Bonneville, "in this union of the offices of leader and priest; as there is in many of their customs and manners, which are all strongly imbued with religion."

The worthy captain, indeed, appears to have been strongly interested by this gleam of un-

looked for light amidst the darkness of the wilderness. He exerted himself, during his sojourn among this simple and welldisposed people, to inculcate, as far as he was able, the gentle and humanizing precepts of the Christian faith, and to make them acquainted with the leading points of its history; and it speaks highly for the purity and benignity of his heart, that he derived unmixed happiness from the task.

"Many a time," says he, "was my little lodge thronged, or rather piled with hearers, for they lay on the ground, one leaning over the other, until there was no further room, all listening with greedy ears to the wonders which the Great Spirit had revealed to the white man. No other subject gave them half the satisfaction, or commanded half the attention; and but few scenes in my life remain so freshly on my memory, or are so pleasurably recalled to my contemplation, as these hours of inter-

course with a distant and benighted race in the midst of the desert."

The only excesses indulged in by this temperate and exemplary people, appear to be gambling and horseracing. In these they engage with an eagerness that amounts to infatuation. Knots of gamblers will assemble before one of their lodge fires, early in the evening, and remain absorbed in the chances and changes of the game until long after dawn of the following day. As the night advances, they wax warmer and warmer. Bets increase in amount, one loss only serves to lead to a greater, until in the course of a single night's gambling, the richest chief becomes the poorest varlet in the camp.

CHAPTER X.

BLACKFEET IN THE HORSE PRAIRIE—SEARCH AFTER THE HUNTERS—DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS—A CARD-PARTY IN THE WILDERNESS—THE CARD-PARTY INTERRUPTED—"OLD SLEDGE" A LOSING GAME—VISITERS TO THE CAMP—IROQUOIS HUNTERS—HANGING-EARED INDIANS.

On the 12th of October, two young Indians of the Nez Percé tribe arrived at Captain Bonneville's encampment. They were on their way homeward, but had been obliged to swerve from their ordinary route through the mountains, by deep snows. Their new route took them through the Horse prairie. In traversing it they had been attracted by the distant

smoke of a camp-fire, and, on stealing near to reconnoitre, had discovered a war party of Blackfeet. They had several horses with them; and, as they generally go on foot on warlike excursions, it was concluded that these horses had been captured in the course of their maraudings.

This intelligence awakened solicitude on the mind of Captain Bonneville, for the party of hunters whom he had sent to that neighbourhood; and the Nez Percés, when informed of the circumstance, shook their heads, and declared their belief that the horses they had seen had been stolen from that very party.

Anxious for information on the subject, Captain Bonneville despatched two hunters to beat up the country in that direction. They searched in vain; not a trace of the men could be found; but they got into a region destitute of game, where they wellnigh famished. At one time, they were three entire days without a mouthful of food.

At length they beheld a buffalo grazing at the foot of a mountain. After manœuvring so as to get within shot, they fired, but merely wounded him. He took to flight, and they followed him over hill and dale, with the eagerness and perseverance of starving men. A more lucky shot brought him to the ground. Stanfield sprang upon him, plunged his knife into his throat, and allayed his raging hunger by drinking his blood. A fire was instantly kindled beside the carcass, when the two hunters cooked, and ate again and again, until, perfectly gorged, they sank to sleep before their hunting fire.

On the following morning they rose early, made another hearty meal, then loading themselves with buffalo meat, set out on their return to the camp, to report the fruitlessness of their mission.

At length, after six weeks' absence, the hunters made their appearance, and were re-

ceived with joy, proportioned to the anxiety that had been felt on their account. They had hunted with success on the prairie, but, while busy drying buffalo meat, they were joined by a few panic-stricken Flatheads, who informed them that a powerful band of Blackfeet were at hand. The hunters immediately abandoned the dangerous hunting-ground, and accompanied the Flatheads to their village. Here they found Mr. Cerré, and the detachment of hunters sent with him to accompany the hunting party of Nes Percés.

After remaining some time at the village, until they supposed the Blackfeet to have left the neighbourhood, they set off with some of Mr. Cerré's men, for the cantonment at Salmon river, where they arrived without accident. They informed Captain Bonneville, however, that not far from his quarters, they had found a wallet of fresh meat and a cord, which they supposed had been left by some prowling

Blackfeet. A few days afterwards, Mr. Cerré, with the remainder of his men, likewise arrived at the cantonment.

Mr. Walker, one of the subleaders, who had gone with a band of twenty hunters, to range the country just beyond the Horse prairie, had, likewise his share of adventures with the all-pervading Blackfeet. At one of his encampments, the guard stationed to keep watch round the camp, grew weary of their duty, and feeling a little too secure, and too much at home on these prairies, retired to a small grove of willows, to amuse themselves with a social game of cards, called "old sledge," which is as popular among these trampers of the prairies, as whist or ecarté among the polite circles of the cities.

From the midst of their sport, they were suddenly aroused by a discharge of fire-arms, and a shrill war-whoop. Starting on their feet, and snatching up their rifles, they beheld in dismay their horses and mules already in

possession of the enemy, who had stolen upon the camp unperceived, while they were spell-bound by the magic of old sledge. The Indians sprang upon the animals barebacked, and endeavoured to urge them off, under a galling fire, that did some execution. The mules, however, confounded by the hurly-burly, and disliking their new riders, kicked up their heels and dismounted half of them, in spite of their horsemanship. This threw the rest into confusion, they endeavoured to protect their unhorsed comrades from the furious assaults of the whites; but, after a scene of "confusion worse confounded," horses and mules abandoned, and the Indians betook themselves to the bushes. Here, they quickly scratched holes in the earth, about two feet deep, in which they prostrated themselves, and while thus screened from the shots of the white men, were enabled to make such use of their bows and arrows, and fusees, as to repulse their assailants, and to effect their retreat. This

adventure threw a temporary stigma upon the game of "old sledge."

In the course of the autumn, four Iroquois hunters, driven by the snow from their hunting grounds, made their appearance at the cantonment. They were kindly welcomed there, and during their sojourn made themselves useful in a variety of ways, being excellent trappers, and, in every way, first-rate woodsmen. They were of the remnants of a party of Iroquois hunters, that came from Canada into these mountain regions many years previously, in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were led by a brave chieftain, named Pierre, who fell by the hands of the Blackfeet, and gave his name to the fated valley of Pierre's Hole.

This branch of the Iroquois tribe has ever since remained among these mountains, at mortal enmity with the Blackfeet, and have lost many of their prime hunters in their feuds with that ferocious race. Some of them fell in with General Ashley, in the course of one of his

gallant excursions into the wilderness, and have continued ever since in the employ of the company.

Among the motley visiters to the winter quarters of Captain Bonneville, was a party of Pends Oreilles (or Hanging-ears), and their chief. These Indians have a strong resemblance, in character and customs, to the Nez Percés. They amount to about three hundred lodges, and are well armed, and possess great numbers of horses. During the spring, summer, and autumn, they hunt the buffalo about the head waters of the Missouri, Henry's fork of the Snake river, and the northern branches of Salmon river. Their winter quarters are upon the Racine Amère, where they subsist upon roots and dried buffalo meat. Upon this river the Hudson's Bay Company have established a trading post, where the Pends Oreilles and the Flatheads bring their peltries to exchange for arms, clothing, and trinkets.

This tribe, like the Nez Percés, evince strong

and peculiar feelings of natural piety. Their religion is not a mere superstitious fear, like that of most savages; they evince abstract notions of morality, a deep reverence for an overruling Spirit, and a respect for the rights of their fellow-men. In one respect, their religion partakes of the pacific doctrines of the Quakers. They hold that the Great Spirit is displeased with all nations who wantonly engage in war; they abstain, therefore, from all aggressive hostilities.

But though thus unoffending in their policy, they are called upon continually to wage defensive warfare, especially with the Blackfeet; with whom, in the course of their hunting expeditions, they come in frequent collision, and have desperate battles. Their conduct, as warriors, is without fear or reproach; and they can never be driven to abandon their hunting grounds.

Like most savages, they are firm believers in dreams, and in the power and efficacy of charms

and amulets, or medicines, as they term them. Some of their braves, also, who have had numerous hairbreadth escapes, like the old Nez Percé chief, in the battle of Pierre's Hole, are believed to wear a charmed life, and to be bullet proof. Of these gifted beings marvellous anecdotes are related, which are most potently believed by their fellow-savages, and sometimes almost credited by the white hunters.

CHAPTER XI.

RIVAL TRAPPING PARTIES—MANŒUVRING—A DESPERATE GAME—VANDERBURGH AND THE BLACKFEET—DESERTED CAMP FIRE—A DARK DEFILE—AN INDIAN AMBUSH—A FIERCE MELEE—FATAL CONSEQUENCES—FITZPATRICK AND BRIDGER—TRAPPERS' PRECAUTIONS—MEETING WITH THE BLACKFEET—MORE FIGHTING—ANECDOTE OF A YOUNG MEXICAN AND AN INDIAN GIRL.

While Captain Bonneville and his men are sojourning among the Nez Percés, on Salmon river, we will inquire after the fortunes of those doughty, rivals of the Rocky Mountain and American Fur Companies, who started off for the trapping grounds to the north-north-west.

Fitzpatrick and Bridger, of the former company, as we have already shown, having received their supplies, had taken the lead, and hoped to have the first sweep of the hunting ground. Vanderburgh and Dripps, however, the two resident partners of the opposite company, by extraordinary exertions, were enabled soon to put themselves upon their traces, and pressed forward with such speed as to overtake them just as they had reached the heart of the beaver country. In fact, being ignorant of the best trapping grounds, it was their object to follow on, and profit by the superior knowledge of the other party.

Nothing could equal the chagrin of Fitzpatrick and Bridger, at being dogged by their inexperienced rivals; especially after their offer to divide the country with them. They tried in every way to blind and baffle them; to steal a march upon them, or lead them on a wrong scent; but all in vain. Vanderburgh made up by activity and intelligence, for his ignorance

of the country: was always wary, always on the alert; discovered every movement of his rivals, however secret, and was not to be eluded or misled.

Fitzpatrick and his colleague, now lost all patience: since the others persisted in following them, they determined to give them an unprofitable chase, and to sacrifice the hunting season, rather than share the products with their rivals. They, accordingly, took up their line of march down the course of the Missouri, keeping the main Blackfoot trail, and tramping doggedly forward, without stopping to set a single trap. The others beat the hoof after them for some time, but by degrees began to perceive that they were on a wildgoosechase, and that that they were getting into a country perfectly barren to the trapper.

They now came to a halt, and bethought themselves how to make up for lost time, and to profit by the remainder of the season. It was thought best to divide their forces and try

different trapping grounds. While Dripps went in one direction, Vanderburgh, with about fifty men, proceeded in another. The latter, in his headlong march, had got into the very heart of the Blackfoot country, yet seems to have been unconscious of his danger.

As his scouts were out one day, they came upon the traces of a recent band of savages. There were the deserted fires still smoking, surrounded by the carcasses of buffaloes just killed. It was evident a party of Blackfeet had been frightened from their hunting camp, and had retreated, probably, to seek reinforcements. The scouts hastened back to the camp, and told Vanderburgh what they had seen. He made light of the alarm, and, taking nine men with him, galloped off to reconnoitre for himself. He found the deserted hunting camp just as they had represented it; there lay the carcasses of buffaloes, partly dismembered; there were the smouldering fires, still faintly sending up their wreaths of smoke: every thing bore

traces of recent and hasty retreat; and gave reason to believe that the savages were still lurking in the neighbourhood.

With needless daring, Vanderburgh put himself upon their trail, to trace them to their place of concealment. It led him over prairies, and through skirts of woodland, until it entered a dark and dangerous ravine. Vanderburgh pushed in, without hesitation, followed by his little band. They soon found themselves in a gloomy dell, between steep banks overhung with trees; where the profound silence was only broken by the tramp of their own horses.

Suddenly the horrid war-whoop burst on their ears, mingled with the sharp report of rifles, and a legion of savages sprang from their concealments, yelling, and shaking their buffalo robes, to frighten the horses. Vanderburgh's horse fell, mortally wounded by the first discharge. In his fall, he pinned his rider to the ground; who called in vain upon his men to

assist in extricating him. One was shot down and scalped at a few paces distance: most of the others were severely wounded, and sought their safety in flight.

The savages now approached to despatch the unfortunate leader, as he lay struggling beneath his horse. He had still his rifle in his hand, and his pistols in his belt. The first savage that advanced received the contents of the rifle in his breast, and fell dead upon the spot; but before Vanderburgh could draw a pistol, a blow from a tomahawk laid him prostrate, and he was despatched by repeated wounds.

Such was the fate of Major Henry Vanderburgh: one of the best and worthiest leaders of the American Fur Company; who, by his manly bearing and dauntless courage, is said to have made himself universally popular among the bold-hearted rovers of the wilderness.

Those of the little band who escaped, fled in consternation to the camp, and spread the most direful reports of the force and ferocity of the

enemy. The party, being without a head, were in complete confusion and dismay, and made a precipitate retreat, without attempting to recover the remains of their butchered leader. They made no halt until they reached an encampment of the Pends Oreilles, or Hanging-ears, where they offered a reward for the recovery of the body, but without success; it never could be found.

In the mean time Fitzpatrick and Bridger, of the Rocky Mountain Company, fared but little better than their rivals. In their eagerness to mislead them, they had betrayed themselves into danger, and got into a region infested with the Blackfeet. They soon found that foes were on the watch for them; but they were experienced in Indian warfare, and were not to be surprised at night, nor drawn into an ambush in the daytime.

As the evening advanced, the horses were all brought in and picketed, and a guard stationed round the camp. At the earliest streak of day one

of the leaders would mount his horse, and gallop off full speed for about half a mile; then look round for Indian trails, to ascertain whether there had been any lurkers round the camp: returning slowly, he would reconnoitre every ravine and thicket, where there might be an ambush. This done, he would gallop off in an opposite direction and repeat the same scrutiny. Finding all things safe, the horses would be turned loose to graze; but always under the eye of a guard.

A caution equally vigilant was observed in the march, on approaching any defile or place where an enemy might lie in wait; and scouts were always kept in the advance, or along the ridges and rising grounds on the flanks.

At length one day a large band of Blackfeet appeared in the open field, but in the vicinity of rocks and cliffs. They kept at a wary distance, but made friendly signs. The trappers replied in the same way, but likewise kept aloof. A small party of Indians now advanced, bearing

the pipe of peace; they were met by an equal number of white men, and they formed a group midway between the two bands, where the pipe was circulated from hand to hand, and smoked with all due ceremony.

An instance of natural affection took place at this pacific meeting. Among the free trappers, in the Rocky mountain band, was a spirited young Mexican, named Loretto; who, in the course of his wanderings, had ransomed a beautiful Blackfoot girl, from a band of Crows, by whom she had been captured. He had made her his wife, after the Indian style, and she had followed his fortunes ever since, with the most devoted affection.

Among the Blackfeet warriors who advanced with the calumet of peace, she recognised a brother. Leaving her infant with Loretto, she rushed forward and threw herself upon her brother's neck; who clasped his long lost sister to his heart, with a warmth of affection but little

compatible with the reputed stoicism of the savage.

While this scene was taking place, Bridger left the main body of trappers, and rode slowly towards the group of smokers, with his rifle resting across the pommel of his saddle. The chief of the Blackfeet stepped forward to meet him. From some unfortunate feeling of distrust Bridger cocked his rifle just as the chief was extending his hand in friendship. The quick ear of the savage caught the click of the lock; in a twinkling, he grasped the barrel, forced the muzzle downward, and the contents were discharged into the earth at his feet. His next movement was to wrest the weapon from the hand of Bridger, and fell him with it to the earth. He might have found this no easy task, had not the unfortunate leader received two arrows in his back during the struggle.

The chief now sprung into the vacant saddle and galloped off to his band. A wild hurry-

scurry scene ensued; each party took to the banks, the rocks, and trees, to gain favourable positions, and an irregular firing was kept up on either side, without much effect. The Indian girl had been hurried off by her people, at the outbreak of the affray. She would have returned, through the dangers of the fight, to her husband and her child, but was prevented by her brother. The young Mexican saw her struggles and her agony, and heard her piercing cries. With a generous impulse, he caught up the child in his arms, rushed forward, regardless of Indian shaft or rifle, and placed it in safety upon her bosom.

Even the savage heart of the Blackfoot chief was reached by this noble deed. He pronounced Loretto a madman for his temerity, but bade him depart in peace. The young Mexican hesitated: he urged to have his wife restored to him, but her brother interfered, and the countenance of the chief grew dark. The girl, he said, belonged to his tribe—she must

remain with her people. Loretto would still have lingered, but his wife implored him to depart, lest his life should be endangered. It was with the greatest reluctance that he returned to his companions.

The approach of night put an end to the skirmishing fire of the adverse parties, and the savages drew off without renewing their hostilities.

We cannot but remark, that both in this affair, and in that at Pierre's Hole, the affray commenced by a hostile act on the part of white men, at the moment when the Indian warrior was extending the hand of amity. In neither instance, as far as circumstances have been stated to us by different persons, do we see any reason to suspect the savage chiefs of perfidy in their overtures of friendship. They advanced in the confiding way, usual among Indians, when they bear the pipe of peace, and consider themselves sacred from attack. If we violate the sanctity of this ceremonial, by any

hostile movement on our part, it is we that incur the charge of faithlessness; and we doubt not, that in both these instances the white men have been considered by the Blackfeet as the aggressors, and have, in consequence, been held up as men not to be trusted.

A word to conclude the romantic incident of Loretto and his Indian bride. A few months subsequent to the event just related, the young Mexican settled his accounts with the Rocky Mountain Company, and obtained his discharge. He then left his comrades and set off to rejoin his wife and child among her people; and we understand that, at the time we are writing these pages, he resides at a trading-house established of late by the American Fur Company, in the Blackfoot country, where he acts as an interpreter, and has his Indian girl with him.

CHAPTER XII.

A WINTER CAMP IN THE WILDERNESS—MEDLEY OF TRAPPERS, HUNTERS, AND INDIANS—SCARCITY OF GAME—NEW ARRANGEMENTS IN THE CAMP—DETACHMENTS SENT TO A DISTANCE—CARELESSNESS OF THE INDIANS WHEN ENCAMPED—SICKNESS AMONG THE INDIANS—EXCELLENT CHARACTER OF THE NEZ PERCES—THE CAPTAIN'S EFFORT AS A PACIFICATOR—A NEZ PERCE'S ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF WAR—ROBBERIES BY THE BLACKFEET—LONG SUFFERING OF THE NEZ PERCES—A HUNTER'S ELYSIUM AMONG THE MOUNTAINS—MORE ROBBERIES—THE CAPTAIN PREACHES UP A CRUSADE—THE EFFECT UPON HIS HEARERS.

For the greater part of the month of November, Captain Bonneville remained in his temporary post on Salmon river. He was now in the full enjoyment of his wishes; leading a hunter's life in the heart of the wilderness, with all its wild populace around him.

Beside his own people, motley in character

and costume (creole, Kentuckian, Indian, half-breed, hired trapper, and free trapper), he was surrounded by encampments of Nez Percés and Flatheads, with their droves of horses covering the hills and plains. It was, he declares, a wild and bustling scene. The hunting parties of white men and red men, continually sallying forth and returning; the groups at the various encampments, some cooking, some working, some amusing themselves at different games; the neighing of horses, the braying of asses, the resounding strokes of the axe, the sharp report of the rifle, the whoop, the halloo, and the frequent burst of laughter, all in the midst of a region suddenly roused from perfect silence and loneliness by this transient hunters' sojourn, realized, he says, the idea of a "populous solitude."

The kind and genial character of the captain had, evidently, its influence on the opposite races thus fortuitously congregated together. The most perfect harmony prevailed between

them. The Indians, he says, were friendly in their dispositions, and honest to the most scrupulous degree, in their intercourse with the white men. It is true, they were somewhat importunate in their curiosity, and apt to be continually in the way, examining every thing with keen and prying eye, and watching every movement of the white men. All this, however, was borne with great good-humour by the captain, and, through his example, by his men. Indeed, throughout all his transactions, he shows himself the friend of the poor Indians, and his conduct towards them is above all praise.

The Nez Percés, the Flatheads, and the Hanging-ears, pride themselves upon the number of their horses, of which they possess more in proportion, than any other of the mountain tribes within the buffalo range. Many of the Indian warriors and hunters, encamped around Captain Bonneville, possess from thirty to forty horses each. Their horses are stout,

well-built ponies, of great wind, and capable of enduring the severest hardship and fatigue. The swiftest of them, however, are those obtained from the whites, while sufficiently young to become acclimated and inured to the rough service of the mountains.

By degrees, the populousness of this encampment began to produce its inconveniences. The immense droves of horses, owned by the Indians, consumed the herbage of the surrounding hills; while, to drive them to any distant pasturage, in a neighbourhood abounding with lurking and deadly enemies, would be to endanger the loss, both of man and beast. Game, too, began to grow scarce. It was soon hunted and frightened out of the vicinity, and though the Indians made a wide circuit through the mountains, in the hope of driving the buffalo towards the cantonment, their expedition was unsuccessful.

It was plain that so large a party could not subsist themselves there, nor in any one place,

throughout the winter. Captain Bonneville, therefore, altered his whole arrangements. He detached fifty men towards the south, to winter upon Snake river, and to trap about its waters in the spring, with orders to rejoin him in the month of July, at Horse creek, in Greek river valley, which he had fixed upon as the general rendezvous of his company for the ensuing year.

Of all his late party, he now retained with him merely a small number of free trappers, with whom he intended to sojourn among the Nez Percés and Flatheads, and adopt the Indian mode of moving with the game and grass. Those bands, in effect, shortly afterwards broke up their encampments, and set off for a less beaten neighbourhood.

Captain Bonneville remained behind for a few days, that he might secretly prepare *caches*, in which he deposited every thing that was not required for current use. Thus lightened of all superfluous encumbrance, he set off on the

20th of November to rejoin his Indian allies. He found them encamped in a secluded part of the country, at the head of a small stream. Considering themselves out of all danger in this sequestered spot, from their old enemies, the Blackfeet, their encampment manifested the most negligent security. Their lodges were scattered in every direction, and their horses covered every hill for a great distance round, grazing upon the upland bunch grass, which grew in great abundance, and though dry, retained its nutritious properties, instead of losing them, like other grasses, in the autumn.

When the Nez Percés, Flatheads, and Pends Oreilles are encamped in a dangerous neighbourhood, says Captain Bonneville, the greatest care is taken of their horses, those prime articles of Indian wealth, and objects of Indian depredation. Each warrior has his horse tied by one foot at night, to a stake planted before his

lodge. Here they remain until broad daylight; by that time, the young men of the camp are already ranging over the surrounding hills. Each family then drives its horses to some eligible spot, where they are left to graze unattended. A young Indian repairs occasionally to the pasture, to give them water, and to see that all is well. So accustomed are the horses to this management, that they keep together in the pasture where they have been left. As the sun sinks behind the hills, they may be seen moving from all points towards the camp, where they surrender themselves, to be tied up for the night. Even in situations of danger, the Indians rarely set guards over their camp at night, intrusting that office entirely to their vigilant and well-trained dogs.

In an encampment, however, of such fancied security as that in which Captain Bonneville found his Indian friends, much of these precautions with respect to their horses are

omitted. They merely drive them, at nightfall, to some sequestered little dell, and leave them there, at perfect liberty, until the morning.

One object of Captain Bonneville in wintering among these Indians, was to procure a supply of horses against the spring. They were, however, extremely unwilling to part with any, and it was with great difficulty that he purchased, at the rate of twenty dollars each, a few for the use of some of his free trappers, who were on foot, and dependant on him for their equipment.

In this encampment, Captain Bonneville remained from the 21st of November to the 9th of December. During this period, the thermometer ranged from thirteen to forty-two degrees. There were occasional falls of snow; but it generally melted away almost immediately, and the tender blades of new grass began to shoot up among the old. On the 7th of December, however, the thermometer fell to seven degrees.

The reader will recollect that, on distributing his forces, when in Green river valley, Captain Bonneville had detached a party, headed by a leader of the name of Matthieu, with all the weak and disabled horses, to sojourn about Bear river, meet the Shoshonie bands, and afterwards to rejoin him at his winter camp on Salmon river.

More than sufficient time had elapsed, yet Matthieu failed to make his appearance, and uneasiness began to be felt on his account. Captain Bonneville sent out four men, to range the country through which he would have to pass, and endeavour to get some information concerning him; for his route lay across the great Snake river plain, which spreads itself out like an Arabian desert, and on which a cavalcade could be descried at a great distance.

The scouts soon returned, having proceeded no further than the edge of the plain; pretending that their horses were lame, but it was

evident they had feared to venture, with so small a force, into these exposed and dangerous regions.

A disease, which Captain Bonneville supposed to be Pneumonia, now appeared among the Indians and made great ravages; carrying off numbers of them, after an illness of three or four days. The worthy captain administered to them as a physician, prescribing profuse sweatings and copious bleedings, and uniformly with success, if the patient was subsequently treated with proper care. In extraordinary cases, the poor savages called in the aid of their own doctors or conjurers, who officiated with great noise and mummery, but with little benefit. Those who died during this epidemic, were buried in graves, after the manner of the whites, but without any regard to the direction of the head. It is a fact worthy of notice, that, while this malady made such ravages among the natives, not a single white man had the slightest symptom of it.

A familiar intercourse of some standing with

the Pierced-nose and Flathead Indians, had now convinced Captain Bonneville of their amicable and inoffensive character; he began to take a strong interest in them, and conceived the idea of becoming a pacificator, and healing the deadly feud between them and the Blackfeet, in which they were so deplorably the sufferers. He proposed the matter to some of the leaders, and urged that they should meet the Blackfeet chiefs in a grand pacific conference, offering to send two of his men to the enemy's camp with pipe, tobacco, and flag of truce, to negotiate the proposed meeting.

The Nez Percés and Flathead sages, upon this, held a council of war of two days' duration, in which there was abundance of hard smoking and long talking, and both eloquence and tobacco were nearly exhausted. At length they came to a decision to reject the worthy captain's proposition, and upon pretty substantial grounds, as the reader may judge.

"War," said the chiefs, "is a bloody business, and full of evil; but it keeps the eyes of

the chiefs always open, and makes the limbs of the young men strong and supple. In war every one is on the alert. If we see a trail, we know it must be an enemy; if the Blackfeet come to us, we know it is for war, and we are ready. Peace, on the other hand, sounds no alarm; the eyes of the chiefs are closed in sleep, and the young men are sleek and lazy. The horses stray into the mountains; the women and their little babes go about alone. But the heart of a Blackfoot is a lie, and his tongue is a trap. If he says peace, it is to deceive; he comes to us as a brother: he smokes the pipe with us; but when he sees us weak, and off of our guard, he will slay and steal. We will have no such peace; let there be war!"

With this reasoning, Captain Bonneville was fain to acquiesce; but, since the sagacious Flatheads and their allies were content to remain in a state of warfare, he wished them, at least, to exercise the boasted vigilance which

war was to produce, and to keep their eyes open. He represented to them the impossibility, that two such considerable clans could move about the country without leaving trails by which they might be traced. Besides, among the Blackfeet braves were several Nez Percés, who had been taken prisoners in early youth, adopted by their captors, and trained up and imbued with warlike and predatory notions; these had lost all sympathies with their native tribe, and would be prone to lead the enemy to their secret haunts. He exhorted them, therefore, to keep upon the alert, and never to remit their vigilance, while within the range of so crafty and cruel a foe.

All these counsels were lost upon his easy and simple-minded hearers. A careless indifference reigned throughout their encampments, and their horses were permitted to range the hills at night in perfect freedom. Captain Bonneville had his own horses brought in at night, and properly picketed and guarded.

The evil he apprehended soon took place. In a single night, a swoop was made through the neighbouring pastures by the Blackfeet, and eighty-six of the finest horses carried off. A whip and a rope were left in a conspicuous situation by the robbers, as a taunt to the simpletons they had unhorsed.

Long before sunrise, the news of this calamity spread like wildfire through the different encampments. Captain Bonneville, whose own horses remained safe at their pickets, watched in momentary expectation of an outbreak of warriors, Pierced-nose and Flathead, in furious pursuit of the marauders; but no such thing—they contented themselves with searching diligently over hill and dale, to glean up such horses as had escaped the hands of the marauders, and then resigned themselves to their loss with the most exemplary quiescence.

Some, it is true, who were entirely unhorsed, set out on a begging visit to their cousins, as they call them, the Lower Nez Perces, who

inhabit the lower country about the Columbia, and possess horses in abundance. To these they repair when in difficulty, and seldom fail, by dint of begging and bartering, to get themselves once more mounted on horseback.

Game had now became scarce in the neighbourhood of the camp, and it was necessary, according to Indian custom, to move off to a less beaten ground. Captain Bonneville proposed the Horse prairie; but his Indian friends objected, that many of the Nez Percés had gone to visit their cousins, and that the whites were few in number, so that their united force was not sufficient to venture upon the buffalo grounds, which were infested by bands of Blackfeet.

They now spoke of a place at no great distance, which they represented as a perfect hunter's elysium. It was on the right branch, or head stream of the river, locked up among cliffs and precipices, where there was no danger from roving bands, and where the Blackfeet dare not

enter. Here, they said, the elk abounded, and the mountain sheep were to be seen trooping upon the rocks and hills. A little distance beyond it, also, herds of buffalo were to be met with, out of the range of danger. Thither they proposed to move their camp.

The proposition pleased the captain, who was desirous, through the Indians, of becom ng acquainted with all the secret places of the land. Accordingly, on the 9th of December, they struck their tents, and moved forward by short stages, as many of the Indians were yet feeble from the late malady.

Following up the right fork of the river, they came to where it entered a deep gorge of the mountains, up which, lay the secluded region so much vaunted by the Indians. Captain Bonneville halted, and encamped for three days, before entering the gorge. In the mean time, he detached five of his free trappers to scour the hills and kill as many elk as possible, before the main body should enter, as they

would then be soon frightened away by the various Indian hunting parties.

While thus encamped, they were still liable to the marauds of the Blackfeet, and Captain Bonneville admonished his Indian friends to be upon their guard. The Nez Percés, however, notwithstanding their recent loss, were still careless of their horses; merely driving them to some secluded spot, and leaving them there for the night, without setting any guard upon them. The consequence was a second swoop, in which forty-one were carried off. This was borne with equal philosophy with the first, and no effort was made either to recover the horses, or to take vengeance on the thieves.

The Nez Percés, however, grew more cautious with respect to their remaining horses, driving them regularly to the camp every evening, and fastening them to pickets. Captain Bonneville, however, told them that this was not enough. It was evident they were dogged by a daring and persevering enemy, who

was encouraged by past impunity; they should, therefore, take more than usual precautions, and post a guard at night over their cavalry.

They could not, however, be persuaded to depart from their usual custom. The horse once picketed, the care of the owner was over for the night, and he slept profoundly. None waked in the camp but the gamblers, who, absorbed in their play, were more difficult to be roused to external circumstances than even the sleepers.

The Blackfeet are bold enemies, and fond of hazardous exploits. The band that were hovering about the neighbourhood, finding they had such pacific people to deal with, redoubled their daring. The horses being now picketed before the lodges, a number of Blackfeet scouts penetrated in the early part of the night, into the very centre of the camp. Here they went about among the lodges, as calmly and deliberately as if at home, quietly cutting loose the

horses that stood picketed by the lodges of their sleeping owners.

One of these prowlers, more adventurous than the rest, approached a fire, round which group of Nez Percés were gambling with the most intense eagerness. Here he stood for some time, muffled up in his robe, peering over the shoulders of the players, watching the changes of their countenances, and the fluctuations of the game. So completely engrossed were they, that the presence of this muffled eavesdropper was unnoticed, and having executed his bravado, he retired undiscovered.

Having cut loose as many horses as they could conveniently carry off, the Blackfeet scouts rejoined their comrades, and all remained patiently round the camp. By degrees, the horses, finding themselves at liberty, took their route towards their customary grazing ground. As they emerged from the camp, they were silently taken possession of, until, having se-

cured about thirty, the Blackfeet sprang on their backs and scampered off. The clatter of hoofs startled the gamblers from their game. They gave the alarm, which soon roused the sleepers from every lodge. Still all was quiescent; no marshalling of forces, no saddling of steed and dashing off in pursuit, no talk of retribution for their repeated outrages. The patience of Captain Bonneville was at length exhausted. He had played the part of a pacificator without success; he now altered his tone, and resolved, if possible, to rouse their war spirit.

Accordingly, convoking their chiefs, he inveighed against their craven policy, and urged the necessity of vigorous and retributive measures, that would check the confidence and presumption of their enemies, if not inspire them with awe. For this purpose, he advised that a war party should be immediately sent off on the trail of the marauders, to follow them, if necessary, into the very heart of the Blackfoot

country, and not to leave them until they had taken signal vengeance. Beside this, he recommended the organization of minor war parties, to make reprisals to the extent of the losses sustained. "Unless you rouse yourselves from your apathy," said he, "and strike some bold and decisive blow, you will cease to be considered men, or objects of manly warfare. The very squaws and children of the Blackfeet will be sent against you, while their warriors reserve themselves for nobler antagonists."

This harangue had evidently a momentary effect upon the pride of the hearers. After a short pause, however, one of the orators arose. It was bad, he said, to go to war for mere revenge. The Great Spirit had given them a heart for peace, not for war. They had lost horses, it was true, but they could easily get others from their cousins, the Lower Nez Percés, without incurring any risk; whereas, in war they should lose men, who were not so readily replaced. As to their late losses, an

increased watchfulness would prevent any more misfortunes of the kind. He disapproved, therefore, of all hostile measures; and all the other chiefs concurred in his opinion.

Captain Bonneville again took up the point. "It is true," said he, "the Great Spirit has given you a heart to love your friends; but he has also given you an arm to strike your enemies. Unless you do something speedily to put an end to this continual plundering, I must say farewell. As yet, I have sustained no loss; thanks to the precautions which you have slighted: but my property is too unsafe here; my turn will come next; I and my people will share the contempt you are bringing upon yourselves, and will be thought, like you, poor-spirited beings, who may at any time be plundered with impunity."

The conference broke up with some signs of excitement on the part of the Indians. Early the next morning, a party of thirty men set off in pursuit of the foe, and Captain Bonneville

hoped to hear a good account of the Blackfeet marauders. To his disappointment, the war party came lagging back on the following day, leading a few old, broken-down, and sorry horses, which the freebooters had not been able to urge to sufficient speed. This effort exhausted the martial spirit, and satisfied the wounded pride of the Nez Percés, and they relapsed into their usual state of passive indifference.

CHAPTER XIII.

STORY OF KOSATO, THE RENEGADE BLACKFOOT.

If the meekness and long-suffering of the Pierced-noses grieved the spirit of Captain Bonneville, there was another individual in the camp, to whom they were still more annoying. This was a Blackfoot renegado, named Kosato, a fiery, hot-blooded youth, who, with a beautiful girl of the same tribe, had taken refuge among the Nez Percés. Though adopted into the tribe, he still retained the fierce, warlike spirit

of his race, and loathed the peaceful, inoffensive habits of those around him. The hunting of the deer, the elk, and the buffalo, which was the height of their ambition, was too tame to satisfy his wild and restless nature. His heart burned for the foray, the ambush, the skirmish, the scamper, and all the haps and hazards of roving and predatory warfare.

The recent hoverings of the Blackfeet about the camp, their nightly prowls, and daring and successful marauds, had kept him in a fever and a flutter; like a hawk in a cage, who hears his late companions swooping and screaming in wild liberty above him. The attempt of Captain Bonneville to rouse the war spirit of the Nez Percés, and prompt them to retaliation, was ardently seconded by Kosato. For several days he was incessantly devising schemes of vengeance, and endeavouring to set on foot an expedition that should carry dismay and desolation into the Blackfeet towns. All his art was exerted to touch upon those fierce springs

of human action with which he was most familiar. He drew the listening savages around him by his nervous eloquence; taunted them with recitals of past wrongs and insults; drew glowing pictures of triumphs and trophies within their reach; recounted tales of daring and romantic enterprise; of secret marchings; covert lurkings; midnight surprisals; sackings, burnings, plunderings, scalpings: together with the triumphant return, and the feasting and rejoicing of the victors. These wild tales were intermingled with the beating of the drum; the yell, the war-whoop and the war-dance, so inspiring to Indian valour. All, however, were lost upon the peaceful spirits of his hearers: not a Nez Percé was to be roused to vengeance, or stimulated to glorious war. In the bitterness of his heart, the Blackfoot renegado repined at the mishap which had severed him from a race of congenial spirits, and driven him to take refuge among beings so destitute of martial fire.

The character and conduct of this man at-

tracted the attention of Captain Bonneville, and he was anxious to hear the reason why he had deserted his tribe, and why he looked back upon them with such deadly hostility. Kosato told him his own story briefly :—it gives a picture of the deep, strong passions that work in the bosom of these miscalled stoics.

"You see my wife," said he: "she is good; she is beautiful—I love her.—Yet, she has been the cause of all my troubles. She was the wife of my chief. I loved her more than he did; and she knew it. We talked together; we laughed together: we were always seeking each other's society; but we were as innocent as children. The chief grew jealous, and commanded her to speak with me no more. His heart became hard toward her; his jealousy grew more furious. He beat her without cause and without mercy; and threatened to kill her outright, if she even looked at me. Do you want traces of his fury? Look at that scar!

"His rage against me was no less persecuting. War-parties of the Crows were hovering round us; our young men had seen their trail. All hearts were roused for action; my horses were before my lodge. Suddenly the chief came, took them to his own pickets, and called them his own. What could I do?—he was a chief. I durst not speak, but my heart was burning. I joined no longer in the council, the hunt, or the war-feast. What had I to do there? an unhorsed, degraded warrior. I kept by myself, and thought of nothing but these wrongs and outrages.

"I was sitting one evening upon a knoll that overlooked the meadow where the horses were pastured. I saw the horses that were once mine grazing among those of the chief. This maddened me, and I sat brooding for a time over the injuries I had suffered, and the cruelties which she I loved had endured for

my sake, until my heart swelled and grew sore, and my teeth were clenched.

"As I looked down upon the meadow, I saw the chief walking among his horses: I fastened my eyes on him as a hawk's: my blood boiled; I drew my breath hard. He went among the willows. In an instant I was on my feet; my hand was on my knife—I flew rather than ran — before he was aware, I sprang upon him, and with two blows laid him dead at my feet. I covered his body with earth, and strewed bushes over the place; then hastened to her I loved, told her what I had done, and urged her to fly with me. She only answered me with tears. I reminded her of the wrongs I had suffered, and of the blows and stripes she had endured from the deceased; I had done nothing but an act of justice; I again urged her to fly; but she only wept the more, and bade me go. My heart was heavy, but my eyes were dry.

I folded my arms. 'Tis well,' said I; 'Kosato will go alone to the desert. None will be with him but the wild beasts of the prairie. The seekers of blood may follow on his trail. They may come upon him when he sleeps, and glut their revenge; but you will be safe. Kosato will go alone.'

"I turned away. She sprang after me, and strained me in her arms. 'No,' cried she, 'Kosato shall not go alone! Wherever he goes, I will go—he shall never part from me.'

"We hastily took in our hands such things as we most needed, and stealing quietly from the village, mounted the first horses we encountered. Speeding day and night, we soon reached this tribe. They received us with welcome, and we have dwelt with them in peace. They are good and kind; they are honest; but their hearts are the hearts of women."

Such was the story of Kosato, as related by

him to Captain Bonneville. It is of a kind that often occurs in Indian life; where love-elopements from tribe to tribe are as frequent as among the novel-read heroes and heroines of sentimental civilization, and often give rise to bloody and lasting feuds.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARTY ENTERS THE MOUNTAIN GORGE—A WILD FASTNESS AMONG HILLS—MOUNTAIN MUTTON—PEACE AND PLENTY—THE AMOROUS TRAPPER—A PIEBALD WEDDING—A FREE TRAPPER'S WIFE—HER GALA EQUIPMENTS—CHRISTMAS IN THE WILDERNESS.

On the 19th of December, Captain Bonneville and his confederate Indians, raised their camp, and entered the narrow gorge made by the north fork of Salmon river. Up this lay the secure and plenteous hunting region so temptingly described by the Indians.

Since leaving Green river, the plains had invariably been of loose sand or coarse gravel, and the rocky formation of the mountains of

primitive limestone. The rivers, in general, were skirted willows and bitter cotton-wood trees, and the prairies covered with wormwood. In the hollow breast of the mountains which they were now penetrating, the surrounding heights were clothed with pine; while the declivities of the lower hills afforded abundance of bunch grass for the horses.

As the Indians had represented, they were now in a natural fastness of the mountains, the ingress and egress of which was by a deep gorge, so narrow, rugged, and difficult, as to prevent secret approach or rapid retreat, and to admit of easy defence. The Blackfeet, therefore, refrained from venturing in after the Nez Percés, awaiting a better chance, when they should once more emerge into the open country.

Captain Bonneville soon found that the Indians had not exaggerated the advantages of this region. Beside numerous gangs of elk, large flocks of the ahsahta or bighorn, the

mountain sheep, were to be seen bounding among the precipices. These simple animals were easily circumvented and destroyed. A few hunters may surround a flock and kill as many as they please. Numbers were daily brought into camp, and the flesh of those which were young and fat, was extolled as superior to the finest mutton.

Here, then, there was a cessation from toil, from hunger, and alarm. Past ills and dangers were forgotten. The hunt, the game, the song, the story, the rough though good-humoured joke, made time pass joyously away, and plenty and security reigned throughout the camp.

Idleness and ease, it is said, lead to love, and love to matrimony, in civilized life, and the same process takes place in the wilderness. Filled with good cheer and mountain mutton, one of the free trappers began to repine at the solitude of his lodge, and to experience the force of that great law of nature, "it is not meet for man to live alone."

After a night of grave cogitation, he repaired to Kowsoter, the Pierced-nose chief; and unfolded to him the secret workings of his bosom.

"I want," said he, "a wife. Give me one from among your tribe. Not a young, giddy-pated girl, that will think of nothing but flaunting and finery, but a sober, discreet, hard-working squaw; one that will share my lot without flinching, however hard it may be; that can take care of my lodge, and be a companion and a helpmate to me in the wilderness."

Kowsoter promised to look round among the females of his tribe, and procure such a one as he desired. Two days were requisite for the search. At the expiration of these, Kowsoter called at his lodge, and informed him that he would bring his bride to him in the course of the afternoon. He kept his word. At the appointed time he approached, leading the bride, a comely copper-coloured

dame, attired in her Indian finery. Her father, mother, brothers by the half-dozen, and cousins by the score, all followed on to grace the ceremony, and greet the new and important relative.

The trapper received his new and numerous family connexion with proper solemnity; he placed his bride beside him, and, filling the pipe, the great symbol of peace, with his best tobacco, took two or three whiffs, then handed it to the chief, who transferred it to the father of the bride, from whence it was passed on from hand to hand and mouth to mouth of the whole circle of kinsmen round the fire, all maintaining the most profound and becoming silence.

After several pipes had been filled and emptied in this solemn ceremonial, the chief addressed the bride; detailing, at considerable length, the duties of a wife; which, among Indians, are little less onerous than those of the packhorse; this done, he turned to her

friends, and congratulated them upon the great alliance she had made. They showed a due sense of their good fortune, especially when the nuptial presents came to be distributed among the chiefs and relatives, amounting to about one hundred and eighty dollars.

The company soon retired, and now the worthy trapper found, indeed, that he had no green girl to deal with; for the knowing dame at once assumed the style and dignity of a trapper's wife, taking possession of the lodge as her undisputed empire; arranging every thing according to her own taste and habitudes; and appearing as much at home, and on as easy terms with the trapper, as if they had been man and wife for years.

We have already given a picture of a free trapper and his horse, as furnished by Captain Bonneville: we shall here subjoin, as a companion picture, his description of a free trapper's wife, that the reader may have a correct idea of the kind of blessing the worthy hunter in

question had invoked to solace him in the wilderness.

"The free trapper, while a bachelor, has no greater pet than his horse; but the moment he takes a wife (a sort of brevet rank in matrimony occasionally bestowed upon some Indian fair one, like the heroes of ancient chivalry, in the open field), he discovers that he has a still more fanciful and capricious animal on which to lavish his expenses.

"No sooner does an Indian belle experience this promotion, than all her notions at once rise and expand to the dignity of her situation; and the purse of her lover, and his credit into the bargain, are tasked to the utmost to fit her out in becoming style. The wife of a free trapper to be equipped and arrayed like any ordinary and undistinguished squaw? Perish the grovelling thought!

"In the first place, she must have a horse for her own riding; but no jaded, sorry, earth-spirited hack; such as is sometimes assigned

by an Indian husband for the transportation of his squaw and her papooses: the wife of a free trapper must have the most beautiful animal she can lay her eyes on. And then, as to his decoration: headstall, breast-bands, saddle and crupper, are lavishly embroidered with beads, and hung with thimbles, hawks' bells, and bunches of ribbons. From each side of the saddle hangs an *esquimoot*, a sort of pocket, in which she bestows the residue of her trinkets and nicknacks, which cannot be crowded on the decoration of horse or her herself. Over this she folds with great care, a drapery of scarlet and bright-coloured calicoes, and now considers the caparison of her steed complete.

"As to her own person, she is even still more extravagant. Her hair, esteemed beautiful in proportion to its length, is carefully plaited, and made to fall with seeming negligence over either breast. Her riding hat is stuck full of party-coloured feathers; her robe, fashioned somewhat after that of the whites, is

of red, green, and sometimes gray cloth, but always of the finest texture that can be procured. Her leggins and moccasins are of the most beautiful and expensive workmanship, and, fitting neatly to the foot and ankle, which, with the Indian women are generally well formed and delicate, look extremely pretty.

"Then as to jewellery: in the way of finger-rings, ear-rings, necklaces, and other female glories, nothing within reach of the trapper's means is omitted, that can tend to impress the beholder with an idea of the lady's high estate. To finish the whole, she selects from among her blankets of various dyes, one of some glowing colour, and throwing it over her shoulders with a native grace, vaults into the saddle of her gay prancing steed, and is ready to follow her mountaineer 'to the last gasp with love and loyalty.'"

Such is the general picture of the free trapper's wife, given by Captain Bonneville; how far it applied in its details to the one in ques-

tion, does not altogether appear, though it would seem from the outset of her connubial career, that she was ready to avail herself of all the pomp and circumstance of her new condition.

It is worthy of mention, that wherever there are several wives of free trappers in a camp, the keenest rivalry exists between them, to the sore detriment of their husband's purses. Their whole time is expended, and their ingenuity tasked to eclipse each other in dress and decoration. The jealousies and heart-burnings thus occasioned among these, so styled, children of nature, are equally intense with those of the rival leaders of style and fashion in the luxurious abodes of civilized life.

The genial festival of Christmas, which throughout all christendom lights up the fireside of home with mirth and jollity, followed hard upon the wedding just described. Though far from kindred and friends, Captain Bonne-

ville and his handful of free trappers were not disposed to suffer the festival to pass unenjoyed; they were in a region of good cheer, and were disposed to be joyous; so it was determined to "light up the yule clog," and celebrate a merry Christmas in the heart of the wilderness.

On Christmas-eve, accordingly, they began their rude fêtes and rejoicings. In the course of the night, the free trappers surrounded the lodge of the Pierced-nose chief, and in lieu of Christmas carols, saluted him with a *feudejoie*.

Kowsoter received it in a truly Christian spirit, and after a speech, in which he expressed his high gratification at the honour done him, invited the whole company to a feast on the following day. His invitation was gladly accepted. A Christmas dinner in the wigwam of an Indian chief! There was novelty in the idea. Not one failed to be present. The banquet was served up in primitive style: skins of various kinds, nicely dressed for the occa-

sion, were spread upon the ground; upon these were heaped up abundance of venison, elk meat, and mountain mutton; with various bitter roots, which the Indians use as condiments.

After a short prayer, the company all seated themselves crosslegged, in Turkish fashion, to the banquet, which passed off with great hilarity. After which, various games of strength and agility, by both white men and Indians, closed the Christmas festivities.

CHAPTER XV.

A HUNT AFTER HUNTERS—HUNGRY TIMES—A VORACIOUS REPAST—WINTRY WEATHER—GODIN'S RIVER—SPLENDID WINTER SCENE ON THE GREAT LAVA PLAIN OF SNAKE RIVER—SEVERE TRAVELLING AND TRAMPING IN THE SNOW—MANŒUVRES OF A SOLITARY INDIAN HORSEMAN—ENCAMPMENT ON SNAKE RIVER—BANNACK INDIANS—THE HORSE CHIEF—HIS CHARMED LIFE.

The continued absence of Matthieu and his party had, by this time, caused great uneasiness in the mind of Captain Bonneville; and, finding there was no dependance to be placed upon the perseverance and courage of scouting parties, in so perilous a quest, he determined to set out himself on the search, and to keep on until he

should ascertain something of the object of his solicitude.

Accordingly, on the 26th of December, he left the camp, accompanied by thirteen stark trappers and hunters, all well mounted and armed for dangerous enterprise. On the following morning they passed out at the head of the mountain gorge, and sallied forth into the open plain. As they confidently expected a brush with the Blackfeet, or some other predatory horde, they moved with great circumspection, and kept vigilant watch in their encampments.

In the course of another day they left the main branch of Salmon river, and proceeded south towards a pass called John Day's defile. It was severe and arduous travelling. The plains were swept by keen and bitter blasts of wintry wind; the ground was generally covered with snow, game was scarce, so that hunger generally prevailed in the camp, while the

want of pasturage soon began to manifest itself in the declining vigour of the horses.

The party had scarcely encamped on the afternoon of the 28th, when two of the hunters who had sallied forth in quest of game came galloping back in great alarm. While hunting they had perceived a party of savages, evidently manœuvring to cut them off from the camp; and nothing had saved them from being entrapped but the speed of their horses.

These tidings struck dismay into the camp. Captain Bonneville endeavoured to reassure his men by representing the position of their encampment, and its capability of defence. He then ordered the horses to be driven in and picketed, and threw up a rough breastwork of fallen trunks of trees, and the vegetable rubbish of the wilderness. Within this barrier was maintained a vigilant watch throughout the night, which passed away without alarm. At early dawn they scrutinized the surrounding plain, to discover whether any enemies had

been lurking about during the night: not a foot-print, however, was to be discovered in the coarse gravel with which the plain was covered.

Hunger now began to cause more uneasiness than the apprehensions of surrounding enemies. After marching a few miles they encamped at the foot of a mountain, in hopes of finding buffalo. It was not until the next day that they discovered a pair of fine bulls on the edge of the plain, among rocks and ravines. Having now been two days and a half without a mouthful of food, they took especial care that these animals should not escape them. While some of the surest marksmen advanced cautiously with their rifles into the rough ground, four of their best mounted horsemen took their stations in the plain, to run the bulls down should they only be maimed.

The buffalo were wounded, and set off in headlong flight. The half-famished horses were too weak to overtake them on the frozen

ground, but succeeded in driving them on the ice, were they slipped and fell, and were easily despatched. The hunters loaded themselves with beef for present and future supply, and then returned and encamped at the last night's fire. Here they passed the remainder of the day, cooking and eating with a voracity proportioned to previous starvation; forgetting in the hearty revel of the moment, the certain dangers with which they were environed.

The cravings of hunger being satisfied, they now began to debate about their further progress. The men were much disheartened by the hardships they had already endured. Indeed, two who had been in the rear guard, taking advantage of their position, had deserted and returned to the lodges of the Nez Percés. The prospect ahead was enough to stagger the stoutest heart. They were in the dead of winter. As far as the eye could reach the wild landscape was wrapped in snow; which was evidently deepening as they advanced.

Over this they would have to toil with the icy wind blowing in their faces: their horses might give out through want of pasturage; and they themselves must expect intervals of horrible famine like that they had already experienced.

With Captain Bonneville, however, perseverance was a matter of pride; and having undertaken this enterprise, nothing could turn him back until it was accomplished: though he declares that, had he anticipated the difficulties and sufferings which attended it, he should have flinched from the undertaking.

Onward, therefore, the little band urged their way, keeping along the course of a stream called John Day's creek. The cold was so intense that they had frequently to dismount and travel on foot, lest they should freeze in their saddles. The days, which, at this season, are short enough even in the open prairies, were narrowed to a few hours by the high mountains, which allowed the travellers but a brief

enjoyment of the cheering rays of the sun. The snow was, generally, at least twenty inches in depth, and in many places much more: those who dismounted had to beat their way with toilsome steps. Eight miles were considered a good day's journey. The horses were almost famished; for the herbage was covered by the deep snow, so that they had nothing to subsist upon but scanty whisps of the dry bunch grass which peered above the surface, and the small branches and twigs of frozen willows and wormwood.

In this way they urged their slow and painful course to the south, down John Day's creek, until it lost itself in a swamp. Here they encamped upon the ice among stiffened willows, where they were obliged to beat down and clear away the snow to procure pasturage for their horses.

Hence, they toiled on to Godin river; so called after an Iroquois hunter in the service of Sublette; who was murdered there by the

Blackfeet. Many of the features of this remote wilderness are thus named after scenes of violence and bloodshed that occurred to the early pioneers. It was an act of filial vengeance on the part of Godin's son, Antoine, that, as the reader may recollect, brought on the recent battle at Pierre's Hole.

From Godin's river Captain Bonneville and his followers came out upon the plain of the Three Butes; so called from three singular and isolated hills that rise from the midst. It is a part of the great desert of Snake river, one of the most remarkable tracts beyond the mountains. Could they have experienced a respite from their sufferings and anxieties, the immense landscape spread out before them was calculated to inspire admiration. Winter has its beauties and glories, as well as summer; and Captain Bonneville had the soul to appreciate them.

"Far away," says he, "over the vast plains, and up the steep sides of the lofty mountains,

the snow lay spread in dazzling whiteness; and whenever the sun emerged in the morning above the giant peaks, or burst forth from among clouds in his mid-day course, mountain and dell, glazed rock and frosted tree, glowed and sparkled with surpassing lustre. The tall pines seemed sprinkled with a silver dust, and the willows studded with minute icicles reflecting the prismatic rays, brought to mind the fairy trees conjured up by the caliph's story-teller, to adorn his vale of diamonds."

The poor wanderers, however, nearly starved with hunger and cold, were in no mood to enjoy the glories of these brilliant scenes; though they stamped pictures on their memory which have been recalled with delight in more genial situations.

Encamping at the west Bute, they found a place swept by the winds, so that it was bare of snow, and there was abundance of bunch grass. Here the horses were turned loose to

graze throughout the night. Though for once they had ample pasturage, yet the keen winds were so intense, that, in the morning, a mule was found frozen to death. The trappers gathered round and mourned over him as over a cherished friend. They feared their half-famished horses would soon share his fate, for there seemed scarce blood enough left in their veins to withstand the freezing cold. To beat the way further through the snow with these enfeebled animals, seemed next to impossible.

Despondency began to creep over their hearts, when, fortunately, they discovered a trail made by some hunting party. Into this they immediately entered, and proceeded with less difficulty. Shortly afterward, a fine buffalo bull came bounding across the snow, and was instantly brought down by the hunters. A fire was soon blazing and crackling, and an ample repast soon cooked, and sooner despatched, after which, they made some

further progress, and then encamped. One of the men reached the camp nearly frozen to death; but good cheer and a blazing fire gradually restored life, and put his blood in circulation.

Having now a beaten path, they proceeded the next morning with more facility; indeed, the snow decreased in depth as they receded from the mountains, and the temperature became more mild. In the course of the day, they discovered a solitary horseman hovering at a distance before them on the plain. They spurred on to overtake him; but he was better mounted on a fresher steed, and kept at a wary distance, reconnoitring them with evident distrust: for the wild dress of the free trappers, their leggins, blankets, and cloth caps garnished with fur and topped off with feathers; even their very elflocks and weather-bronzed complexions, gave them the look of Indians rather than white men, and made him mis-

take them for a war-party of some hostile tribe.

After much manœuvring, the wild horseman was at length brought to a parley; but even then he conducted himself with the caution of a knowing prowler of the prairies. Dismounting from his horse, and using him as a breast-work, he levelled his gun across his back, and, thus prepared for defence, like a wary cruiser upon the high seas, he permitted himself to be approached within speaking distance.

He proved to be an Indian of the Banneck tribe, belonging to a band at no great distance. It was some time before he could be persuaded that he was conversing with a party of white men, and induced to lay aside his reserve and join them. He then gave them the interesting intelligence, that there were two companies of white men encamped in the neighbourhood. This was cheering news to Captain Bonneville, who hoped to find in one of these companies

the long-sought party of Matthieu. Pushing forward, therefore, with renovated spirits, he reached Snake river by nightfall, and there fixed his encampment.

Early the next morning (13th January, 1833), diligent search was made about the neighbourhood for traces of the reported parties of white men. An encampment was soon discovered, about four miles further up the river; in which Captain Bonneville, to his great joy, found two of Matthieu's men, from whom he learnt that the rest of his party would be there in the course of a few days. It was a matter of great pride and self-gratulation to Captain Bonneville, that he had thus accomplished his dreary and doubtful enterprise; and he determined to pass some time in this encampment, both to await the return of Matthieu, and to give needful repose both to men and horses.

It was, in fact, one of the most eligible and delightful wintering grounds in that whole range of country. The Snake river here wound

its devious way between low banks through the great plain of the Three Butes; and was bordered by wide and fertile meadows. It was studded with islands, which, like the alluvial bottoms, were covered with groves of cotton-wood, thickets of willow, tracts of good lowland grass, and abundance of green rushes. The adjacent plains, were so vast in extent, that no single band of Indians could drive the buffalo out of them; nor was the snow of sufficient depth to give any serious inconvenience. Indeed, during the sojourn of Captain Bonneville in this neighbourhood, which was in the heart of winter, he found the weather, with the exception of a few cold and stormy days, generally mild and pleasant; freezing a little at night, but invariably thawing with the morning's sun —resembling the Spring weather in the middle part of the United States.

The lofty range of the Three Tetons, those great landmarks of the Rocky mountains, rising in the east, and circling away to the north and

west of the great plain of Snake river; and the mountains of Salt river and Portneuf towards the south, catch the earliest falls of snow. Their white robes lengthen as the winter advances, and spread themselves far into the plain, driving the buffalo in herds to the banks of the river in quest of food; where they are easily slain in great numbers.

Such were the palpable advantages of this winter encampment; added to which, it was secure from the prowlings and plunderings of any petty band of roving Blackfeet: the difficulties of retreat rendering it unwise for those crafty depredators to venture an attack, unless with an overpowering force.

About ten miles below the encampment lay the Banneck Indians; numbering about one hundred and twenty lodges. They are brave and cunning warriors, and deadly foes of the Blackfeet; whom they easily overcome in battles where their forces are equal. They are not vengeful and enterprising in warfare, however;

seldom sending war-parties to attack the Blackfeet towns, but contenting themselves with defending their own territories and homes. About one-third of their warriors are armed with fusees; the rest with bows and arrows.

As soon as the spring opens, they move down the right bank of Snake river, and encamp at the heads of the Boisée and Payette. Here their horses wax fat on good pasturage, while the tribe revels in plenty upon the flesh of deer, elk, bear, and beaver. They then descend a little further, and are met by the Lower Nez Percés, with whom they trade for horses; giving in exchange beaver, buffalo, and buffalo robes. Hence they strike upon the tributary streams on the left bank of Snake river, and encamp at the rise of the Portneuf and Blackfoot streams, in the buffalo range. Their horses, although of the Nez Percé breed, are inferior to the parent stock, from being ridden at too early an age; being often bought when but two years old, and immediately put

to hard work. They have fewer horses, also, than most of these migratory tribes.

At the time that Captain Bonneville came into the neighbourhood of these Indians, they were all in mourning for their chief, surnamed The Horse. This chief was said to possess a charmed life, or rather, to be invulnerable to lead; no bullet having ever hit him, though he had been in repeated battles, and often shot at by the surest marksmen. He had shown great magnanimity in his intercourse with the white men. One of the great men of his family had been slain in an attack upon a band of trappers passing through the territories of his tribe. Vengeance had been sworn by the Bannecks; but The Horse interfered, declaring himself the friend of white men, and, having great influence and authority among his people, he compelled them to forego all vindictive plans, and to conduct themselves amicably whenever they came in contact with the traders.

This chief had bravely fallen in resisting an

attack made by the Blackfeet upon his tribe, while encamped at the head of Godin river. His fall in nowise lessened the faith of his people in his charmed life; for they declared that it was not a bullet which laid him low, but a bit of horn which had been shot into him by some Blackfoot marksman; aware, no doubt, of the inefficacy of lead.

Since his death, there was no one with sufficient influence over the tribe to restrain the wild and predatory propensities of the young men. The consequence was, they had become troublesome and dangerous neighbours; openly friendly, for the sake of traffic, but disposed to commit secret depredations, and to molest any small party that might fall within their reach.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISADVENTURES OF MATTHIEU AND HIS PARTY—RETURN TO THE CACHES AT SALMON RIVER—BATTLE BETWEEN NEZ PERCES AND BLACKFEET — HEROISM OF A NEZ PERCE WOMAN — ENROLLED AMONG THE BRAVES.

On the 3d of February, Matthieu, with the residue of his band arrived in camp. He had a disastrous story to relate. After parting with Captain Bonneville in Green river valley, he had proceeded to the westward, keeping to the north of the Eutaw mountains, a spur of the great Rocky chain. Here he experienced the most rugged travelling for his horses, and soon discovered that there was but little chance of

meeting the Shoshonie bands. He now proceeded along Bear river, a stream much frequented by trappers; intending to shape his course to Salmon river, to rejoin Captain Bonneville.

He was misled, however, either through the ignorance or treachery of an Indian guide, and conducted into a wild valley, where he lay encamped during the autumn and the early part of the winter, nearly buried in snow, and almost starved. Early in the season he detached five men, with nine horses, to proceed to the neighbourhood of Sheep rock, on Bear river, where game was plenty, and there to procure a supply for the camp.

They had not proceeded far on their expedition, when their trail was discovered by a party of nine or ten Indians, who immediately commenced a lurking pursuit, dogging them secretly for five or six days. So long as their encampments were well chosen, and a proper watch maintained, the wary savages kept aloof;

at length, observing that they were badly encamped, in a situation where they might be approached with secrecy, the enemy crept stealthily along under cover of the river bank, preparing to burst suddenly upon their prey.

They had not advanced within striking distance, however, before they were discovered by one of the trappers. He immediately, but silently, gave the alarm to his companions. They all sprang upon their horses, and prepared to retreat to a safe position. One of the party, however, named Jennings, doubted the correctness of the alarm, and, before he mounted his horse, wanted to ascertain the fact. His companions urged him to mount, but in vain; he was incredulous, and obstinate. A volley of fire-arms by the savages dispelled his doubts; but so overpowered his nerves, that he was unable to get into his saddle. His comrades, seeing his peril and confusion, generously leapt from their horses to protect him. A shot from a rifle brought him to the earth; in his agony,

he called upon the others not to desert him. Two of them, Le Roy and Ross, after fighting desperately, were captured by the savages; the remaining two vaulted into their saddles, and saved themselves by headlong flight, being pursued for nearly thirty miles. They got safe back to Matthieu's camp, where their story inspired such dread of lurking Indians, that the hunters could not be prevailed upon to undertake another foray in quest of provisions. They remained, therefore, almost starving in their camp; now and then killing an old disabled horse for food, while the elk and the mountain sheep roamed unmolested among the surrounding mountains.

The disastrous surprisal of this hunting party, is cited by Captain Bonneville to show the importance of vigilant watching and judicious encampments in the Indian country. Most of these kind of disasters to traders and trappers arise from some careless inattention to the state of their arms and ammunition, the placing of

their horses at night, the position of their camping ground, and the posting of their night watches. The Indian is a vigilant and crafty foe; by no means given to harebrained assaults; he seldom attacks when he finds his foe well prepared and on the alert. Caution is at least as efficacious a protection against him as courage.

The Indians who made this attack were at first supposed to be Blackfeet; until Captain Bonneville found, subsequently, in the camp of the Bannecks, a horse, saddle, and bridle, which he recognised as having belonged to one of the hunters. The Bannecks, however, stoutly denied having taken these spoils in fight, and persisted in affirming that the outrage had been perpetrated by a Blackfoot band.

Captain Bonneville remained on Snake river nearly three weeks after the arrival of Matthieu and his party. At length, his horses having recovered strength sufficient for a journey, he prepared to return to the Nez Percés, or rather

to visit his *caches* on Salmon river; that he might take thence goods and equipments for the opening season. Accordingly, leaving sixteen men at Snake river, he set out, on the 19th of February, with sixteen others, on his journey to the caches.

Fording the river, he proceeded to the borders of the deep snow, when he encamped under the lea of immense piles of burnt rock. On the 21st, he was again floundering through the snow, on the great Snake river plain, where it lay to the depth of thirty inches. It was sufficiently incrusted to bear a pedestrian; but the poor horses broke through the crust, and plunged and strained at every step. So lacerated were they by the ice, that it was necessary to change the front every hundred yards, and put a different one in the advance, to break the way.

The open prairies were swept by a piercing and biting wind from the north-west. At night, they had to task their ingenuity to provide

shelter, and to keep from freezing. In the first place, they dug deep holes in the snow, piling it up in ramparts to windward, as a protection against the blast. Beneath these, they spread buffalo skins; upon which they stretched themselves in full dress, with caps, cloaks, and moccasins, and covered themselves with numerous blankets; notwithstanding all which, they were often severely pinched with the cold.

On the 28th of February, they arrived on the banks of Godin river. This stream emerges from the mountains opposite an eastern branch of the Malade river, running south-east, forms a deep and swift current about twenty yards wide, passing rapidly through a defile to which it gives its name, and then enters the great plain, where, after meandering about forty miles, it is finally lost in the region of the Burnt Rocks.

On the banks of this river, Captain Bonneville was so fortunate as to come upon a buffalo

trail. Following it up, he entered the defile, where he remained encamped for two days, to allow the hunters time to kill and dry a supply of buffalo beef.

In this sheltered defile, the weather was moderate, and grass was already sprouting more than an inch in height. There was abundance, too, of the salt weed; which grows most plentiful in clayey and gravelly barrens. It resembles pennyroyal, and derives its name from a partial saltness. It is a nourishing food for the horses in the winter, but they reject it the moment the young grass affords sufficient pasturage.

On the 6th of March, having cured sufficient meat, the party resumed their march, and moved on with comparative ease, excepting where they had to make their way through snow drifts which had been piled up by the wind.

On the 11th, a small cloud of smoke was observed rising in a deep part of the defile. An encampment was instantly formed, and scouts

sent out to reconnoitre. They returned with intelligence that it was a hunting party of Flat-heads, returning from the buffalo range laden with meat. Captain Bonneville joined them the next day, and prevailed upon them to proceed with his party a few miles below, to the caches, whither he proposed also to invite the Nez Percés, whom he hoped to find somewhere in this neighbourhood. In fact, on the 13th, he was rejoined by that friendly tribe, who, since he separated from them on Salmon river, had likewise been out to hunt the buffalo, but had continued to be haunted and harassed by their old enemies the Blackfeet, who, as usual, had contrived to carry off many of their horses.

In the course of this hunting expedition, a small band of ten lodges separated from the main body, in search of better pasturage for their horses. About the 1st of March, the scattered parties of Blackfoot banditti united to the number of three hundred fighting men, and determined upon some signal blow. Pro-

ceeding to the former camping ground of the Nez Percés, they found the lodges deserted; upon which, they hid themselves among the willows and thickets, watching for some straggler, who might guide them to the present "whereabout" of their intended victims.

As fortune would have it, Kosato, the Blackfoot renegado, was the first to pass along, accompanied by his blood-bought bride. He was on his way from the main body of hunters to the little band of ten lodges. The Blackfeet knew and marked him as he passed; their eyes glared with vindictive fury; he was within bowshot of their ambuscade; yet, much as they thirsted for his blood, they forbore to launch a shaft; sparing him for the moment, that he might lead them to their prey. Secretly following his trail, they discovered the lodges of the unfortunate Nez Percés, and assailed them with tremendous shouts and yellings.

The Nez Percés numbered only twenty men, but nine of whom were armed with fusees.

They showed themselves, however, as brave and skilful in war as they had been mild and long-suffering in peace. Their first care was to dig holes inside of their lodges; thus ensconced, they fought desperately, laying several of the enemy dead upon the ground; while they, though some of them were wounded, lost not a single warrior.

During the heat of the battle, a woman of the Nez Percés, seeing her warrior badly wounded and unable to fight, seized his bow and arrows, and bravely and successfully defended his person, contributing to the safety of the whole party.

In another part of the field of action, a Nez Percé had crouched behind the trunk of a fallen tree, and kept up a galling fire from his covert. A Blackfoot seeing this, procured a round log, and placing it before him as he lay prostrate, rolled it forward towards the trunk of the tree behind which his enemy lay crouched. It was

a moment of breathless interest: whoever first showed himself would be in danger of a shot. The Nez Percé put an end to the suspense. The moment the logs touched, he sprang upon his feet, and quick as lightning, discharged the contents of his fusee into the back of his antagonist.

By this time, the Blackfeet had got possession of the horses; several of their warriors lay dead on the field, and the Nez Percés, ensconced in their lodges, seemed resolved to defend themselves to the last gasp.

It so happened that the chief of the Blackfeet party was a renegade from the Nez Percés; but, unlike Kosato, he had no vindictive rage against his native tribe, but was rather disposed, now he had got the booty, to spare all unnecessary effusion of blood. He held a long parley, therefore, with the besieged, and finally drew off his warriors, taking with him seventy horses. It appeared, afterwards, that the bullets of the

Blackfeet had been entirely expended in the course of the battle, so that they were obliged to make use of stones as substitutes.

At the outset of the fight, Kosato, the renegade, fought with fury rather than valour; animating the others by word as well as deed. A wound in the head from a rifle-ball, laid him senseless on the earth. There his body remained when the battle was over, and the victors were leading off the horses. His wretched wife was hanging over him with frantic lamentations. The conquerors paused and urged her to leave the lifeless renegado, and return with them to her kindred. She refused to listen to their solicitations, and they passed on.

As she sat watching the features of Kosato, and giving way to passionate grief, she thought she perceived him to breathe. She was not mistaken. The ball, which had been nearly spent before it struck him, had stunned instead of killing him. By the ministry of his faithful wife, he gradually recovered; reviving to a re-

doubled love for her, and hatred of his native tribe.

As to the female who had so bravely defended her husband, she was elevated by the tribe to a rank far above her sex, and, beside other honourable distinctions, was thenceforward permitted to take a part in the war-dances of the braves!

CHAPTER XVII.

OPENING OF THE CACHES—DETACHMENTS OF CERRE AND HODGKISS—SALMON RIVER MOUNTAINS—SUPERSTITION OF AN INDIAN TRAPPER—GODIN'S RIVER—PREPARATIONS FOR TRAPPING—AN ALARM—AN INTERRUPTION—A RIVAL BAND—PHENOMENA OF SNAKE RIVER PLAIN—VAST CLEFTS AND CHASMS—INGULFED STREAMS—SUBLIME SCENERY—A GRAND BUFFALO HUNT.

Captain Bonneville found his caches perfectly secure, and having secretly opened them, he selected such articles as were necessary to equip the free trappers, and to supply the inconsiderable trade with the Indians, after which he closed them again. The free trappers being newly rigged out and supplied, were in

high spirits, and swaggered gaily about the camp.

To compensate all hands for past sufferings, and to give a cheerful spur to further operations, Captain Bonneville now gave the men what, in frontier phrase, is termed "a regular blow out." It was a day of uncouth gambols, and frolics, and rude feasting. The Indians joined in the sports and games with hearty good-will, and all was mirth and good fellowship.

It was now the middle of March, and Captain Bonneville made preparations to open the spring campaign. He had pitched upon Malade river for his main trapping ground for the season. This is a stream which rises among the great bed of mountains north of the Lava plain, and after a winding course, falls into Snake river.

Previously to his departure, the captain despatched Mr. Cerre with a few men, to visit the Indian villages and purchase horses; he furnished his clerk, Mr. Hodgkiss, also, with a

small stock of goods, to keep up a trade with the Indians during the spring, for such peltries as they might collect, appointing the caches on Salmon river as the point of rendezvous, where they were to rejoin him on the 15th of June following.

This done, he set out for Malade river with a band of twenty-eight men, composed of hired and free trappers, and Indian hunters, together with eight squaws. Their route lay up along the right fork of Salmon river, as it passes through the deep defile of the mountains. They travelled very slowly, not above five miles a day, for many of the horses were so weak that they faltered and staggered as they walked.

Pasturage, however, was now growing plentiful. There was abundance of fresh grass, which in some places had attained such height as to wave in the wind. The native flocks of the wilderness, the mountain sheep, as they are called by the trappers, were continually to be seen upon the hills between which they passed,

and a good supply of mutton was provided by the hunters, as they were advancing towards a region of scarcity.

In the course of his journey, Captain Bonneville had occasion to remark an instance of the many notions, and almost superstitions, which prevail among the Indians, and among some of the white men, with respect to the sagacity of the beaver. The Indian hunters of his party were in the habit of exploring all the streams along which they passed, in search of "beaver lodges," and occasionally set their traps with some success. One of them, however, though an experienced and skilful trapper, was invariably unsuccessful. Astonished and mortified at such unusual bad luck, he at length conceived the idea, that there was some odour about his person, of which the beaver got scent, and retreated at his approach. He immediately set about a thorough purification. Making a rude sweating-house on the banks of the river, he would shut himself up until in a reeking

perspiration, and then suddenly emerging, would plunge into the river. A number of these sweatings and plungings having, as he supposed, rendered his person perfectly "inodorous," he resumed his trapping with renovated hope.

About the beginning of April, they encamped upon Godin's river, where they found the swamp full of "muskrat houses." Here, therefore, Captain Bonneville determined to remain a few days, and make his first regular attempt at trapping. That his maiden campaign might open with spirit, he promised the Indians and free trappers an extra price for every muskrat they should take.

All now set to work for the next day's sport. The utmost animation and gaiety prevailed throughout the camp. Every thing looked auspicious for their spring campaign. The abundance of muskrats in the swamp, was but an earnest of the nobler game they were to find when they should reach the Malade river, and

have a capital beaver country all to themselves, where they might trap at their leisure, without molestation.

In the midst of their gaiety, a hunter came galloping into the camp, shouting, or rather yelling, "A trail! a trail!—lodge-poles! lodge-poles!"

These were words full of meaning to a trapper's ear. They intimated that there was some band in the neighbourhood, and probably a hunting party, as they had lodge-poles for an encampment. The hunter came up and told his story. He had discovered a fresh trail, in which the traces made by the dragging of lodge-poles were distinctly visible. The buffalo, too, had just been driven out of the neighbourhood, which showed that the hunters had already been on the range.

The gaiety of the camp was at an end; all preparations for muskrat trapping were suspended, and all hands sallied forth to examine the trail. Their worst fears were soon con-

firmed. Infallible signs showed the unknown party, in the advance, to be white men; doubtless, some rival band of trappers! Here was competition when least expected; and that, too, by a party already in the advance, who were driving the game before them. Captain Bonneville had now a taste of the sudden transitions to which a trapper's life is subject. The buoyant confidence in an uninterrupted hunt was at an end; every countenance lowered with gloom and disappointment.

Captain Bonneville immediately despatched two spies to overtake the rival party, and endeavour to learn their plans; in the mean time, he turned his back upon the swamp and its muskrat houses, and followed on at "long camps," which, in trappers' language, is equivalent to long stages.

On the 6th of April, he met his spies returning. They had kept on the trail like hounds, until they overtook the party at the

south end of Godin's defile. Here they found them comfortably encamped, twenty-two prime trappers, all well appointed, with excellent horses in capital condition, led by Milton Sublette, and an able coadjutor, named Jarvie, and in full march for the Malade hunting ground.

This was stunning news. The Malade river was the only trapping ground within reach; but to have to compete there with veteran trappers, perfectly at home among the mountains, and admirably mounted, while they were so poorly provided with horses and trappers, and had but one man in their party acquainted with the country—it was out of the question!

The only hope that now remained, was that the snow, which still lay deep among the mountains of Godin river, and blocked up the usual pass to the Malade country, might detain the other party until Captain Bonne-

ville's horses should get once more into good condition in their present ample pasturage.

The rival parties now encamped together; not out of companionship, but to keep an eye upon each other. Day after day passed by, without any possibility of getting to the Malade country. Sublette and Jarvie endeavoured to force their way across the mountain; but the snows lay so deep as to oblige them to turn back. In the mean time, the captain's horses were daily gaining strength, and their hoofs improving, which had been worn and battered by mountain service. The captain, also, was increasing his stock of provisions, so that the delay was all in his favour.

To any one who merely contemplates a map of the country, this difficulty of getting from Godin to Malade river will appear inexplicable, as the intervening mountains terminate in the Great Snake river plain, so that, apparently, it

would be perfectly easy to proceed round their bases.

Here, however, occur some of the striking phenomena of this wild and sublime region. The great lower plain which extends to the feet of these mountains, is broken up near their bases into crests and ridges, resembling the surges of the ocean breaking on a rocky shore.

In a line with the mountains the plain is gashed with numerous and dangerous chasms, from four to ten feet wide, and of great depth. Captain Bonneville attempted to sound some of these openings, but without any satisfactory result. A stone dropped into one of them reverberated against the sides for apparently a very great depth, and, by its sound, indicated the same kind of substance with the surface, as long as the strokes could be heard. The horse, instinctively sagacious in avoiding danger, shrinks back in alarm from the

least of these chasms; pricking up his ears, snorting and pawing, until permitted to turn away.

We have been told by a person well acquainted with the country, that it is sometimes necessary to travel fifty and sixty miles, to get round one of these tremendous ravines. Considerable streams, like that of Godin's river, that run with a bold, free current, lose themselves in this plain; some of them end in swamps, others suddenly disappear; finding, no doubt, subterranean outlets.

Opposite to these chasms, Snake river makes two desperate leaps over precipices, at a short distance from each other; one twenty, the other forty feet in height.

The volcanic plain in question, forms an area of about sixty miles in diameter, where nothing meets the eye but a desolate and awful waste; where no grass grows nor water runs, and where nothing is to be seen but lava. Ranges of mountains skirt this plain,

and, in Captain Bonneville's opinion, were formerly connected, until rent asunder by some convulsion of nature. Far to the east, the Three Tetons lift their heads sublimely, and dominate this wide sea of lava;—one of the most striking features of a wilderness where every thing seems on a scale of stern and simple grandeur.

We look forward with impatience for some able geologist to explore this sublime, but almost unknown region.

It was not until the 25th of April, that the two parties of trappers broke up their encampments, and undertook to cross over the south-west end of the mountain by a pass explored by their scouts. From various points of the mountain, they commanded boundless prospects of the lava plain, stretching away in cold and gloomy barrenness as far as the eye could reach. On the evening of the 26th, they reached the plain west of the mountain, watered by the Malade, the Boisée, and other

streams, which comprised the contemplated trapping ground.

The country about the Boisée (or Woody) river, is extolled by Captain Bonneville as the most enchanting he had seen in the far west: presenting the mingled grandeur and beauty of mountain and plain; of bright running streams, and vast grassy meadows waving to the breeze.

We shall not follow the captain throughout his trapping campaign, which lasted until the beginning of June; nor detail all the manœuvres of the rival trapping parties, and their various schemes to outwit and out-trap each other. Suffice it to say, that after having visited and camped about various streams with various success, Captain Bonneville set forward early in June for the appointed rendezvous at the caches. On the way, he treated his party to a grand buffalo hunt.* The scouts had re-

* For an interesting account of the buffalo, see Appendix.—English Editor.

ported numerous herds in a plain beyond an intervening height.

There was an immediate halt; the fleetest horses were forthwith mounted, and the party advanced to the summit of the hill. From hence, they beheld the great plain below absolutely swarming with buffalo. Captain Bonneville now appointed the place where he would encamp; and towards which the hunters were to drive the game. He cautioned the latter to advance slowly, reserving the strength and speed of the horses, until within a moderate distance of the herds. Twenty-two horsemen descended cautiously into the plain, conformably to these directions.

"It was a beautiful sight," says the captain, "to see the runners, as they are called, advancing in column, at a slow trot, until within two hundred and fifty yards of the outskirts of the herd, then dashing on at full speed, until lost in the immense multitude of buffaloes

which were scouring the plain in every direction."

All was now tumult and wild confusion. In the mean time, Captain Bonneville and the residue of the party moved on to the appointed camping ground; thither the most expert runners succeeded in driving numbers of buffalo, which were killed hard by the camp, and the flesh transported thither without difficulty. In a little while the whole camp looked like one great slaughter-house; the carcasses were skilfully cut up, great fires were made, scaffolds erected for drying and jerking beef, and an ample provision made for future subsistence. On the 15th of June, the precise day appointed for the rendezvous, Captain Bonneville and his party arrived safely at the caches.

Here he was joined by the other detachments of his main party, all in good health and spirits. The *caches* were again opened, supplies of various kinds taken out, and a liberal allow-

ance of *aquavitæ* distributed throughout the camp, to celebrate with proper conviviality this merry meeting.

APPENDIX.

THE BUFFALO.

Every thing that connects itself with the history of this strange and interesting animal, which by an old author is described as resembling "in some respect a Lion, in other the Camels, Horses, Oxen, Sheep, or Goats,"* must be important to collect, for its numbers have diminished so rapidly within a century, its rovings have been so much restricted, that there is reason to apprehend that it will soon disappear from the face of the land.

The buffalo was formerly found throughout the whole territory of the United States, with the exception of that part which lies east of Hudson's River and Lake Champlain, and of narrow strips of coast on the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, that were

* Purchas his Pilgrimage, London, 1614, p. 778.

swampy, and had low thick woods. That it did not exist within eighty or one hundred miles of the Atlantic coast is rendered probable from the circumstance that all the early writers whom Mr. Colhoun has consulted on the subject, and they are numerous, do not mention them as existing there, but further back. Thomas Morton, one of the first settlers of New England, says, that the Indians "have also made description of great heards of well growne beasts, that live about the parts of this lake," Erocoise, now Lake Ontario, "such as the Christian world (until this discovery), hath not bin made acquainted with. These Beasts are of the bignesse of a Cowe, their flesh being very good foode, their hides good lether, their fleeces very useful, being a kind of wolle, as fine almost as the wolle of the Beaver, and the Salvages do make garments thereof." He adds, "It is tenne yeares since first the relation of these things came to the eares of the English." * We have introduced this quotation, partly with a view to show that the fineness of the buffalo wool, which has caused it within a few years to become an object of commerce, was

* New English Canaan, by Thomas Morton. Amsterdam, 1637, p. 98.

known as far back as Morton's time. He compares it to that of the beaver, and with some truth; we were shown lower down on Red River, hats that appeared to be of a very good quality. They had been made in London with the wool of the buffalo. An acquaintance on the part of Europeans with the animal itself, can be referred to nearly a century before that; for, in 1582, Guzman met with buffalo in the province of Cinaloa.* De Laet says, upon the authority of Gomara, when speaking of the buffalo in Quivira, that they are almost black, and seldom diversified with white spots.† In his History, written subsequently to 1684, Hubbard does not enumerate this animal among those of New England. Purchas informs us that in 1613, the adventurers discovered in Virginia, "a slow kinde of cattell as bigge as kine, which were good meate."‡ From Lawson we find that great plenty of buffaloes, elks, &c. existed near Cape Fear river and its tributaries.§ And we know that some of those who first

* De Laet Americæ Utriusque Descriptio. Lugd. Batav. Anno 1633. Lib. 6. Cap. 6.

† Idem, Lib. vi. Cap. 17.

‡ Purchas, ut supra, p. 759.

§ Lawson, ut supra, p. 48, 115, &c.

settled in the Abbeville district, in South Carolina, in 1756, found the buffalo there. De Soto's party, who traversed East Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansa territory, and Louisiana, from 1539 to 1543, saw no buffalo; they were told that the animal was north of them; however they frequently met with buffalo hides, particularly when west of the Mississippi; and Du Pratz, who published in 1758, informs us that at that time the animal did not exist in lower Louisiana. We know, however, of one author, Bernard Romans, who wrote in 1774, and who speaks of the buffalo as a benefit of nature bestowed upon Florida. There can be no doubt that the animal approached the Gulf of Mexico near the Bay of St. Bernard, for Alvar Nunez about the year 1535, saw them not far from the coast, and Joutel, one hundred and fifty years afterwards, saw them at the Bay of St. Bernard. It is probable that this bay is the lowest point of latitude at which this animal has been found east of the Rocky mountains. There can be no doubt of their existence west of those mountains, though Father Venegas does not include them among the animals of California, and although they were not seen west of the mountains by Lewis and

Clarke, nor mentioned by Harmon or Mackenzie as existing in New Caledonia, a country of indefinite extent, which is included between the Pacific Ocean, the Rocky mountains, the territory of the United States, and the Russian possessions on the north-west coast of America. Yet its existence at present on the Columbia appears to be well ascertained, and we are told that there is a tradition among the natives, that, shortly before the visit of our enterprising explorers, destructive fires had raged over the prairies, and driven the buffalo east of the mountains. Mr. Dougherty, the very able and intelligent sub-agent who accompanied the expedition to the Rocky mountains, and who communicated so much valuable matter to Mr. Say, asserted that he had seen a few of them in the mountains, but not west of them. It is highly probable that the buffalo ranged on the western side of the Rocky mountains, to as low a latitude as on the eastern side. De Laet says, on the authority of Herrera, that they grazed as far south as the banks of the river Yaquimi.* In the same chapter

* "Juxta Yaquimi fluminis ripas, tauri vaccæque et prægrandes cervi pascuntur."—Ut supra, Lib. 6. Cap. 6.

this author states, that Martin Perez had, in 1591, estimated the province of Cinaloa, in which this river runs, to be three hundred leagues from the city of Mexico. This river is supposed to be the same which, on Mr. Tanner's map of North America (Philadelphia, 1822), is named Hiaqui, and situated between the 27th and 28th degrees of north latitude. Perhaps, however, it may be the Rio Gila which empties itself in latitude 32°. Although we may not be able to determine with precision the southern limit of the roamings of the buffalo, west of the mountains, the fact of their existence there in great abundance, is amply settled on the authority of Gomara, by the testimony of De Laet, L. 6, C. 17, and of Purchas, p. 778. Its limits to the north are not easier to determine. In Hakluyt's collection we have an extract of a letter from Mr. Anthonie Parkhurst, in 1578, in which he uses these words; in the island of Newfoundland there " are mightie beastes, like to camels in greatnesse, and their feete cloven. I did see them farre off, not able to discerne them perfectly, but their steps shewed that their feete were cloven and bigger than the feete of Camels. I suppose them to be a kind of Buffes which I read to bee in the countreys

adjacent and very many in the firme land."* In the same collection, p. 689, we find in the account of Sir Humfrey Gilbert's voyages, which commenced in 1583, that there are said to be in Newfoundland, "buttolfes, or a beast it seemeth by the tract and foote very large in maner of an oxe." It may, however, be questioned, whether these were not musk oxen, instead of the common buffalo or bison of our prairies. We have no authority whatever which warrants us in admitting that the buffalo existed north of Lakes Ontario, Erie, &c. and east of Lake Winnepeek. From what we know of the country between Nelson's River, Hudson's Bay, and the lower lakes, including New South Wales and Upper Canada, we are inclined to believe that the buffalo never abounded there, if indeed any were ever found north of the lakes. But to the west of Lake Winnepeek we know that they are found as far north as the 62d degree of north latitude. Captain Franklin's party killed one on Salt river, about the 60th degree. Probably they

* The principall navigations, voyages, and discoveries of the English nation, &c., by Richard Hakluyt. London, 1589, p. 676.

are found all over the prairies, which are bounded on the north by a line commencing at the point at which the 62° meets the base of the Rocky mountains, and running in a south-easterly direction to the southern extremity of Lake Winnepeek, which is but very little north of the 50th degree. On the Saskatchawan, buffaloes are very abundant. It may be proper to mention here, that the small white buffalo, of which Mackenzie makes frequent mention on the authority of the Indians, who told them that they lived in the mountains, is probably not the bison; for Lewis and Clarke inform us that the Indians designated by that name the mountain sheep.* It is probable that, west of the Rocky mountains, the buffalo does not extend north of the Columbia.

At present it is scarcely seen east of the Mississippi, and south of the St. Lawrence. Governor Cass's party found, in 1819, buffaloes on the east side of the Mississippi, above the falls of St. Anthony. Every year this animal's rovings are restricted. In 1822, the limit of its wanderings down the St. Peter was Great Swan Lake, near Camp Crescent. In 1823, the Gentlemen of the Columbia Fur Com-

* Vol. ii., p. 325.

pany were obliged to travel five days, in a north-west direction from Lake Travers, before they fell in with the game, but they then soon succeeded in killing sixty animals; the herds afterwards advanced very near to Lake Travers, and perhaps even extended somewhat down the St. Peter. There can be no doubt but this constant subtraction from the buffalo's roamings must affect his numbers; certainly more than the practice of killing only the cows and leaving the bulls; a custom which has probably prevailed among the Indians for a long while, and which we cannot therefore consider as the source of the great modern diminution in their numbers. Civilization in its steady march destroys the larger gregarious animals, and even drives back the hunting man, unless he change his mode of life. If the deer were more social in its habits, that interesting tenant of our forests would have been long since driven to the asylum of the buffalo, the elk, and the beaver.

All the buffaloes which our party saw, were of an uniform dun colour. We were informed that they had been sometimes seen white or spotted. The age of the animal is said to be indicated by the number of rugæ or transverse lines on the horns. Mr.

Colhoun killed a bull, that by this process of reckoning, was supposed to be twenty-six years old; in this calculation the first four rugæ are allowed for the first year. If this mode of calculation be correct, as is generally supposed, the buffalo probably attains a greater age than the tame ox. The frame of the buffalo is much larger than that of domestic cattle, and though its fore parts are uncouth, the hind parts are handsomely formed. Cows are considered more delicate eating than bulls, especially during the rutting season, when the latter assume a rank and strong flavour. This was the case about the time that our party saw them. We had no opportunity of killing cows, and as the bulls were lean, we ate principally the tongue and liver of those that we killed. These, together with the hump, hump ribs, marrow bones, heart, tender loin, and hunter's roast (fillet near the shoulder blade), constitute the choice pieces, and when buffaloes are plenty, are the only parts that are eaten. At Lake Travers, it is estimated that cows generally yield from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds of good meat. This is exclusive of the head and other parts. There are eight bones (viz. those from the four legs and thighs), which are enumerated as mar-

row bones. It is difficult to conjecture the quantity of marrow which they afford, either singly or collectively, but the marrow of one bone is frequently sufficient for a meal. To obtain it, the flesh is scraped off from the bones, and they are thrown into the fire; after remaining a few minutes, they are withdrawn, the bones broken, and the marrow, taken out with a stick splintered at one end, is eaten without any accompaniment. It is a very rich delicate food, resembling when roasted, in colour and consistence, a custard. It is by some persons preferred raw, but did not appear to us in that state to be so palatable.

In pursuing a herd of buffalo, particularly if it consist of bulls, a strong odour of musk is emitted, and is left in their wake, and their feet make the grass crackle as if it were on fire. We mentioned that the buffalo bulls frequently approached very near to our line, which, by some of our fellow-travellers, was attributed to the imperfect vision of the animal, whose eyes are obscured by the great quantity of hair which covers its face; this is probably, however, incorrect; it either arises from the greater fearlessness of the bulls during the rutting season,

or perhaps from the circumstance, that though they distinguish men very well, they are not aware of their nature by sight alone. It is the odour of man which is principally required to drive them off. We have seen bulls approach to windward of our line with the greatest composure, pass near us, but the moment they fell to leeward, the smell would set them galloping with the greatest speed. The quickness of their olfactory nerves is well known; sometimes when the wind is strong, they will be made aware of the presence of men, at two or more miles to windward of them. Buffaloes and elks are seen on the same prairies, and do not appear to be effected by each other's presence, they do not, however, herd together; each associates only with the animals of its own kind. We saw on the prairies with the buffalo, besides the elk, only the common prairie wolf, which appears to be the common attendant on the buffalo. Among the birds which we remarked were the bald eagle (Falco leucocephalus), and the hooping crane. The buffalo is often seen wallowing and throwing up the dust, which at a great distance resembles the spouting of a whale.

The difficulty of killing this animal is very great,

and may be judged of by the fact that Mr. Peale fired fourteen balls into the chest of a buffalo before he killed him, and Mr. Scott, with a view to ascertain whether a ball fired at the head would break the frontal bone, discharged his rifle at a dead bull within ten paces; the ball did not penetrate, but merely entangled itself in the hair, where it was found. It had, however, struck the forehead, and left a mark before it rebounded. This agreed with the general impression which Mr. Scott had formed on the subject, having been stationed more or less for the last ten years in a buffalo country, and having had frequent opportunities of firing at them in every direction. His skill and address in shooting are proverbial on the Mississippi and Missouri. We had many occasions of witnessing them ourselves, though the great scarcity of game of any kind observed during the whole of the expedition, except on the prairies at the head of Red river, limited his opportunities of displaying his rare talent.

When we consider the great force, size, agility, and speed of the buffalo, we must regret that no successful experiment has as yet been made to domesticate this noble animal, and appropriate it to

the wants of man. Instead of endeavouring to turn to use the many valuable animals which formerly roved over our country, the settlers seem to have been satisfied with importing those from Europe. There can, we think, be but little doubt that the buffalo might, by proper management, be domesticated, and made to replace with great advantage the European ox. We have seen it, in one instance, used with apparent facility. Another experiment, which would certainly be very interesting, would be to ascertain whether the breeds might not be crossed, and what would be the result. We have, it is true, heard it asserted, and the impression appears to be general in that country, that a domestic bull had in certain cases impregnated a buffalo cow, and that the produce had partaken of the characters of both parents; but that a favourable issue could not be expected in the case of impregnation of the domestic cow, by the buffalo bull, because the pelvis of the former being too small for the issue of the calf, both the cow and her progeny would die before parturition. Mr. Say has endeavoured, but in vain, to trace the report to its source; having always found those who related it to speak on conjecture,

he is inclined to doubt whether the experiment has ever been tried; indeed we were told, on Lake Winnepeek, where we saw a pair of buffaloes that were kept with domestic cattle, that during the rutting season the buffalo bull would not suffer the common cow to approach him. Perhaps, however, this natural antipathy might be made to wear away. The experiment is certainly worth trying.—KEATING'S NARRATIVE. *English Editor.*

END OF VOL. I.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.